

Cultural Value

The Story of Lidice and Stoke-on-Trent: Towards Deeper Understandings of the Role of Arts and Culture

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Executive Summary

This report details the research activities, findings and outputs from our six month Research Development Award exploring the value of arts and culture in relation to empathy, compassion and understanding. Our research focused on storytelling approaches in the context of exhibitions and community and participatory arts projects. We use as a case study the relationship between Stoke-on-Trent and the village of Lidice in the Czech Republic. Following the destruction of Lidice by the Nazis in 1942, Stoke-on-Trent Doctor and Councillor Barnett Stross launched the 'Lidice Shall Live' campaign, rallying local working people to contribute to a fund that eventually contributed to re-building the village after the war. Many people demonstrated tremendous empathy and compassion by donating up to a week's wages despite the hardships of the time. In recent years, the links between Stoke-on-Trent and Lidice have been refreshed and are explored, expressed and celebrated almost exclusively through arts and culture. Our main research question is therefore why we would choose the medium of arts and culture to link distant geographical communities in ways that foster empathy, compassion and understanding.

We held interviews and focus groups with a multi-disciplinary group of academics and with a wide range of artists and creative practitioners to discuss issues of empathy, compassion and understanding, and the value of arts and culture. A working group of participants was formed to explore new ways of identifying and expressing such value. In June 2014, some of the working group travelled to the Czech Republic and took part in a research visit that included participation in arts and cultural activities and events. A range of resources to support the design and evaluation of arts activities was developed, including a series of short films to disseminate the findings and to encourage on-going reflection and debate.

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Key words

Cultural value, empathy, compassion, understanding, creativity, global citizenship

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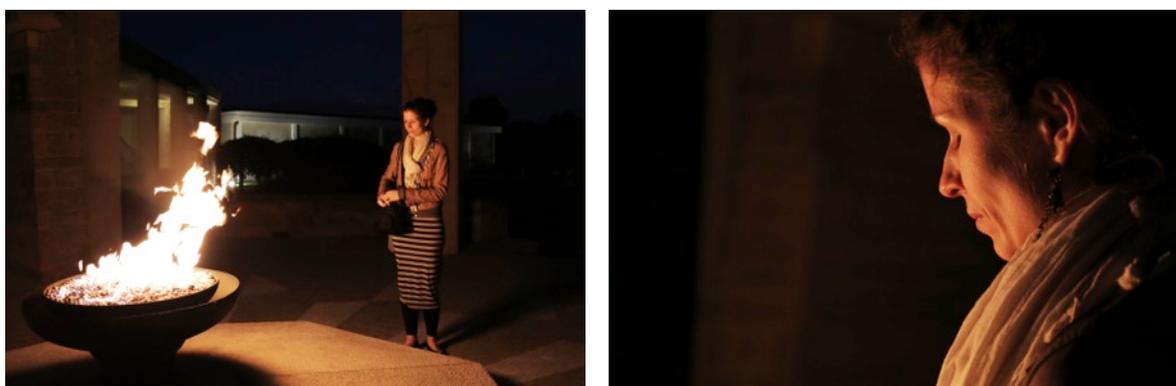
Introduction

This report details the research activities, findings and outputs from our six month Research Development Award exploring the value of arts and culture in relation to empathy, compassion and understanding. We focus particularly on storytelling in the context of exhibitions and community and participatory arts projects, and on the potential of arts and culture to link distant geographical communities in ways that foster empathy, compassion and understanding. We do this with reference to the case study of Stoke-on-Trent and the village of Lidice in the Czech Republic.

The report begins with a review of the existing literature. We draw upon literature from a range of disciplines in order to discuss what is meant by empathy, compassion and understanding. We then explore the role of narratives and storytelling and discuss their significance in relation to arts and culture. We conclude our review by looking at what is already known about the value of arts and culture in terms of empathy, compassion and understanding.

We then turn our attention to the research design and process. This will include discussion of the interviews and focus groups, and also of the function and findings of the working group of academics and creative practitioners, which met on three occasions as part of the project. We also outline the role of the film makers, again considering their significance in terms of the overall research. We give an account of our research visit to the Czech Republic, and highlight the value of the visit in addressing our research objectives.

Having thus explained our research methodology, we go on to highlight some key findings, and then to discuss their significance in relation to cultural value. We conclude the report by identifying the resources that have been produced in order to support the design and evaluation of arts activities in ways that better demonstrates their value in relation to empathy, compassion and understanding. We offer links to be able to access these resources, and discuss other dissemination activities and future plans to further develop our work in this area.



(Cathie Powell-Davies at the Lidice Memorial in June 2014)

Literature Review

As an Arts and Humanities Research Council Cultural Value project, our research first and foremost aims to contribute to the overall endeavour of capturing the value of arts and culture to individuals and to society. Part of the key rationale for doing so lies in the tendency towards a narrow instrumental rhetoric around the value of the arts, that focuses on measurable socioeconomic impact:

"Utility thus becomes a handy proxy for value, and a way out of the challenging task of articulating a compelling case for the role and importance of the arts and humanities in today's world, especially when the case has to be put to decision makers."

(Belfiore in Belfiore and Upchurch 2013:36)

By contrast, Cultural Value projects take a broader view of the notion of value, including the aesthetic and cognitive aspects of arts and cultural experiences. They seek to find new ways of articulating and demonstrating that value.

Our project focuses specifically on the value of arts and culture in relation to empathy, compassion and understanding. This is an important aspect of the debate around cultural value. Martha Nussbaum (2010) argues that people need a 'narrative imagination' in order to relate to the complex world they live in:

"This means the ability to think what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person's story, and to understand the emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have."

(Nussbaum 2010:95-96)

Nussbaum, drawing upon the work of paediatrician and psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott (1896-1971), goes on to discuss the crucial importance of play in enabling children to view situations from the perspectives of others. According to Nussbaum, Winnicott also maintained that the arts enabled people as adults to continue to sustain their capacity for play, and that he thus 'saw the role of the arts in human life as, above all, that of nourishing and extending the capacity for empathy.' (Nussbaum 2010:101).

In more recent years, Roman Krznaric, an influential popular philosopher, has made a persuasive case for the 'radical power' of empathy to transform people's lives and to bring about social change (Krznaric 2014). He has compiled a set of resources to encourage people to engage in what he terms an 'empathy revolution'.¹ Krznaric argues for the central role of arts and culture in engaging people's empathy and encouraging social action:

¹ See <http://www.romankrznaric.com>

"Art and literature have been taking human beings on empathic journeys ever since the citizens of ancient Athens wept for the characters on stage during the festival of Dionysus. Theatre, film, fiction, painting and photography have all played a role in generating what the Greeks called ekstasis, or ecstasy, where we temporarily step outside of ourselves and are transported into other lives and cultures."

(Krznaric 2014: 166)

Within a live performance, factors such as 'emotional resonance', i.e. the ability of the performance to elicit a strong emotional response from an audience and a degree of empathy with the performers, and 'social bonding' – a sense of connectedness with other people as a result of the performance, can be seen as some of the 'intrinsic values of the arts experience' (WolfBrown 2007 cited by AJA 2012:12)

In this review of the literature, we begin by exploring what we mean by empathy, compassion and understanding. As an inter-disciplinary research project, we draw on a range of literature, including from the fields of sociology, psychology and philosophy. Our research focuses specifically on storytelling approaches in the context of community and participatory arts and exhibitions, and we therefore examine what is meant by narratives and why we feel that they are of central importance in understanding empathy, compassion and understanding in the context of arts and culture. We then go on to explore in greater depth the existing literature on the relationship between arts and culture and empathy, compassion and understanding. We examine some of the specific ways in which empathy may develop, for example by re-humanising the 'other'. Finally, we highlight some of the limitations in existing knowledge and introduce our key research questions.

Empathy, Compassion and Understanding

Within the literature reviewed it is suggested that empathy first entered the English lexicon in the early 20th Century and has its roots in the two Greek words 'em' and 'pathos' (feeling into) (Escalas and Stern 2003, Mercer and Reynolds 2002). The fundamental paradox found when reviewing this multi-disciplinary literature with a focus on empathy is that although there is no universally accepted meaning attached to the concept (Philips 2003) there seems to be a consensus that empathy is a good thing particularly in relation to the development of healthy relationships (Segal et al 2013). In contrast a lack of empathy has been related to such social problems as domestic violence, poor parenting, violent crime and bullying (Segal et al 2013). Conversely it has been suggested that developing or fostering empathy can inhibit future or any immediate turn towards aggression (Bryant 1982) and we review this and other positive aspects in reference to arts and cultural events. The relationship between empathy and altruism is also particularly important within the literature and has also prompted much research (Bengston and Johnson 1987).

It is suggested both within our own findings and within the literature that our ability to measure empathy is still very limited (Lietz et al 2011). The value of empathy in such

occupations as social work, medicine, nursing, and other caring professions has resulted in the need to develop ways to make empathy both observable and measurable (McCleod 1997). This is particularly the case with the recent inquiry at Stafford hospital where there has been a 'reported' lack of empathy and compassion from caring staff. Bearing the above in mind, methodological concerns within the literature tend to focus on issues of psychometric integrity and construct validity. There has thus been a focus on developing valid measures whereby individual high scores on scales of empathy and compassion reflect greater empathy in care (Orzcan et al 2011, Bryant, 1982). The main 'realist' critique within this body of work is that many 'empathy scales' are uni-dimensional and geared towards understanding the individual person's subjective response to a controlled environmental condition (Caruson and Mayer 1998, Davies 1983) and so fail to capture the complexity of the concepts.

Hoffman (2000) added to this discussion, strongly emphasising his understanding of empathy as a process rather than an outcome. He suggested that empathy was not only multi-dimensional but one had to consider the developmental process which included initially the ability to mimic. From an evolutionary and bio-medical perspective, brain development includes the laying down of neurological pathways that are able to generate affective responses known as 'mirroring', for example if a person starts to cry in front of you it may make you feel like crying too. Using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) neuro-scientists have discovered that people who score high on an empathy test have especially busy mirror neurone systems in their brains (Keen 2006). What is produced from the stimulation of the neurone systems is said to be emergent: it can only exist as an effect and cannot be reduced to the sum of its parts. Any observable phenomenon is multi-dimensional, not just spatially but temporally, and it is not possible to isolate or delimit any phenomenon and say definitively 'this is it'. It is impossible to trace a linear 'cause and effect' or to predict what the effects may be. This uncertainty increases with time (Cilliers 1998). These are all features of complex systems. Whilst we are clearly presenting only the very general aspects of such systems that are by no means exhaustive, we do so in order to emphasise that the development of empathy is complex and dynamic, and this is important to recognise when thinking about how we might later think about how to demonstrate cultural value in relation to this concept.

Research into the use of empathy scales has focused on a number of dimensions that are important to consider (Henry et al 1996). Davies (1983:113-116) identified two cognitive and two emotional dimensions of empathy which are reported below:

FANTASY: using imagination to experience the feelings of characters in books or other creative works

PERSPECTIVE TAKING: adopting the psychological viewpoint of another person

EMPATHIC CONCERN: feelings of concern or sympathy for unfortunate others

PERSONAL DISTRESS: personal feelings of distress or discomfort and anxiety in difficult interpersonal relationships.

These dimensions begin to offer us insights into the ways in which engaging in arts and cultural activities may contribute to empathic responses by engaging people's imaginations and enabling them to see things from other people's perspective.

Within the body of literature reviewed, empathy is defined in various ways: on the one hand, it is defined cognitively in relation to perspective taking; on the other hand it can be defined as an emotional arousal in response to the feelings or experiences of others. Both of these perspectives are relevant in the context of arts and cultural activities. An integrative approach employs both cognitive and emotional measures (Keen 2006). Empathy has also been defined as more active orientation or more participative than sympathy. The relationship between empathy and sympathy is seen by some to be hierarchically ranked (Escalas and Stern 2003) and also sequential, though opinions vary as to which is the ultimate end or end state. Compassion tends to be discussed alongside empathy and sympathy, as an inter-related concept – often in relation to child development. For example, Nussbaum (2010: 37) notes that:

"Children who develop a capacity for sympathy or compassion – often through empathetic perspectival experience – understand what their aggression has done to another person, for whom they increasingly care."

Martha Nussbaum in Frankel Paul et.al. (1996:28) describes the philosophical tradition of compassion as 'a central bridge between the individual and the community', the way in which as humans we relate 'the interests of others to our own personal goods'; she argues simply that compassion 'is, above all, a certain sort of thought about the well-being of others'. Historically, the term 'pity' was used in place of compassion, but this developed negative connotations of superiority and condescension from Victorian times onwards. Nussbaum also later notes the tendency for compassion to be an unreliable feeling, with humans typically feeling compassion towards people that they know, and not towards those that they don't (Nussbaum 2010). This is clearly of great relevance to our research, as we are focusing on such feelings being generated across geographical divides.

The suggestion that empathy is orientated towards action leads us to the critical question of what we hope to achieve by evoking empathy, compassion and understanding. Both policy makers and arguably artists, may be interested in advocating empathy as a foundation for democracy and social change (and therefore social justice). Whilst empathy and compassion can be viewed as 'altruistic emotions', people's empathy can also be evoked in a passive and consumptive way, which falls short of the social change ambition (Boler 1997). Social empathy is a broader concept than interpersonal empathy because social empathy includes applying empathic insights to the experiences of larger social and cultural groups, as well as relationships between those groups (Segal et al 2013). It is clear that both empathy and compassion require a level of understanding of another person's circumstances. We therefore approach the idea of understanding within this project in terms of creating the conditions for empathy and compassion to develop, and how this can be done within the context of arts and culture. In the next section of this review, we explore the concept of narratives and examine their significance in relation to arts and cultural activities. Issues of social change

alongside empathic engagement when looked at through the lens of a narrative metaphor suggest a notion of a power struggle between dominant elites and those marginalised groups who have no 'voice'. Narratives, and therefore storytelling, play a central role in understanding such a power struggle.

The Importance of Narratives

A chain of thought in philosophy, starting with Nietzsche and extending through Bergson to Deleuze and other contemporary French philosophers, argues that there is no set essence to what it means to be a human being, that rather than having a core 'being', humanity is in a constant state of becoming. When this approach is underpinned by the contemporary science of complexity (Serres & Cilliers for example) we get a description of humanity as emergent. Ochs and Capps (1996:32) suggest that we develop our selves through the stories we tell within a 'complex matrix of co-authored selves'. The narratives that people tell about themselves can be thought of as ontological narratives (Elliot 2005) in the sense that these narratives actively construct the self of the narrator. As Gergen Suggests (1992):

'The old Cartesian dictum "I think there I am" might better be replaced with "we communicate therefore I am." I am only an "I" by virtue of a relationship. I can only "know" that I have thoughts and emotions by virtue of my participation in a culture' (Gergen 1992 56-57).

Ochs and Capps (1996) point out that across different cultures, narrative emerges early in communicative development and is a fundamental means of making sense of any experiences we encounter. In this sense narrative and self are inseparable (Ochs and Capps 1996). This has a profound impact on how we might perhaps approach or conceptualise empathy (or the opposite - a lack of empathy). In the context of the research on empathy we may thus come to view empathy as an emotional connection but that ultimately emotions are not natural physiological stirrings (Bruner 1990) but may be considered narrative constructs. From this point of view we can begin to develop a sense of how empathy is fostered or created within or between individuals or communities or indeed how it is blocked or negated.

This turn to narrative involves taking on board the notion of power inherent within certain streams of post structuralism, particularly those inclined towards a narrative metaphor (Bauman, 2004a; 2004b). From a post structural narrative perspective such as Bauman's, making sense always involves the expression of some stories and the silencing of others (Bauman 2004a, 2004b). If Bauman's narrative concept of power is suggestive of being able to tell a particular story at the expense of another we can come to understand how empowering arts and cultural activities with story-telling at their heart can be. When a 'deficit' label such as schizophrenia or depressive personality is suggested as the 'truth' about someone by a powerful professional, all other narratives are closed off (Gergen 1990:359) and not heard. Arts and cultural events can come to be the process by which marginalised groups are able to construct their own truths. Thus power is in part the silencing of the 'other(s)', for any situation multiple descriptions are

usually possible (Bauman 2004a, 2004b) and arts and cultural events become sites where these multiple descriptions can flourish.

As suggested above Bauman (2004b) describes narrative understanding as selective, leading to some voices being silenced, some stories not heard. Bauman (2004b) suggests stories are akin to spotlights in that they light up part of the stage while the rest remains in darkness. Indeed one of our participants spoke of the research process itself being a spotlight onto her own work, highlighting aspects she had not considered. As a spotlight draws the eyes to part of the stage a narrative draws us into a focus on what the narrator says matters or is 'true', putting into shadow what doesn't (Bauman 2004b). We can think of marginalised groups or their stories as existing in these shadows. Bauman (2004b) goes on to point out that those things forced into the shadow are no longer part of 'what is', they are destroyed, but it is a creative destruction because when some version is created another version is always destroyed. This perspective allows a focus or the spotlight to be turned onto the stories that have been silenced.

For Ochs and Capps (1996:36) resistance to dominant narratives is prominent in the work of academics, politicians and artists: this could include, as suggested above, allowing stories of marginalised groups to be heard through arts and cultural events. Some narratives are silenced which has a profound impact in terms of empathy on those who find themselves in a silenced group, how can one's narrative self be empathised with if one's narrative is silenced or not accepted as a legitimate narrative? The legitimate narratives tend to be those dominant stories that remain unexamined and can crush, by their very taken for granted nature, the voicing of others. In essence it is a stance that suggests that if this is the 'truth' or common sense what else is there to say? Johnson (2005) suggests that western political culture places an emphasis on rationality and reason and is loath to acknowledge that narratives of identity are also strategies for engendering or denying empathy.

Gorrell (2000), using this same narrative metaphor that we employ, suggests that the first step in justifying abuse or violence against another person is to de-humanise them through narrative strategies that construct them as non-human. How does one empathise with the non-human, those who have been reduced to a group stereotype? In this sense to empathise is to re-humanise and this raises the question in Gorrell's (2000) work of what exactly is involved in re-humanising the 'other'. Research suggests that the dehumanisation of another group is a particularly critical step in the cycle that promotes genocide or ethnic cleansing (Halpern and Weinstein 2004). Halpern and Weinstein (2004) suggest that in the current East European context in the aftermath of ethnic cleansing much emphasis has been given to the re-construction of infra-structure and the re-establishment of the rule of law and so is lacking a crucial element. Halpern and Weinstein (2004) suggest that to reverse the destruction of social and familial networks a process of re-humanisation and re-personalisation must occur too so that friends and neighbours can begin to view each other as human beings again. They must come to see each other's perspective through engaging with each other's narrative constructions and so become interested in another's distinctive subjective perspective. In short they must

develop empathy. In this sense the role of empathy moves beyond the understanding of the individual other although positive in itself, to the idea that empathy can overcome or prevent social injustice or marginalisation on a much bigger stage or scale.

We have explored the importance of narrative in some detail, because our research focuses on storytelling in the context of arts and cultural activities. Ochs and Capps (1996) suggest that artists and healers alike use narrative, that seeing is more than just an act of perception it is a form of human relationship. Ochs and Capps (1996) describe theatre productions as co-creations between those who create and those who view. The audience confronted with narratives that lay bare imaginary perhaps even shocking realities are moved to confront the experience of another. Escalas and Stern (2003) use the concept of 'hooked' in their review of narratives in product commercials. They suggest that a well-developed story is better able to hook viewers (a concept that suggest absorption or what some call 'flow') and elicit higher levels of positive emotions compared to poorly developed stories. Escalas and Stern (2003) suggest that classical dramas or a story that has a beginning, middle and end and show an evolution of the character foster responses that are more sympathetic and more empathic than responses to a simple vignette format. These are just a few of many possible examples of the ways in which narratives can be seen to play a central role within arts and cultural activities in fostering a connection or empathic response.

Methodologically the narrative metaphor is perhaps the best antidote to the lack of humility (Gergen 1992) of a modernist/realist stance and the suggestion that individuals can be decontextualized and placed along a scale of empathic ability that allows no room for doubt or contingency.

'However, once conscious of the cultural contingency of my ontology and values, I acquire a certain degree of humility. I am prepared for more searching dialogue about these matters, especially from those who do not share my assumptions'
(Gergen 1992:807)

We therefore believe that in order to understand the relationship between arts and culture and empathy, compassion and understanding, it is essential to also gain a wider theoretical understanding of the function of narratives in society. We need to understand the ways in which the stories that we tell about groups of people can de-humanise them and lead them to be seen as the 'other' – the outsider. We need to understand the ways in which more powerful, dominant groups can silence the voices of the less powerful in a way that further promotes such stereotypes. Only by such understanding can we begin to explore and analyse the ways in which arts and culture may challenge such processes, enabling people to connect with each other, challenging stereotypes, re-humanising, and enabling people to discover their commonalities. We will now turn our attention to focus directly on the relationship between arts and culture and empathy, compassion and understanding, whilst still incorporating a strong emphasis on the importance of narratives and storytelling approaches.

The Value of Arts and Culture

Part of the rationale for our research project is the awareness that whilst a focus on empathy, compassion and understanding tends to be something of a taken-for-granted aspect of many arts projects, it tends to be implicit, rather than explicit, and therefore not directly addressed in the design and implementation of projects. Moreover, typical tools for evaluating arts and cultural interventions are limited in their potential to address the more complex aspects of ways in which people may have reflected on their experiences and potentially reached deeper understandings of themselves and others. A discussion paper by Annabel Jackson Associates (2012) highlights a lack of existing literature addressing what constitutes 'quality of experience' in the arts, even though this is a key concept in Arts Council England's strategy. The report discusses aspects of a quality experience that are directly relevant to our own research, such as "high attention, altered emotional state, personal meaning, intellectual stimulation, sharing experience, emotional connection to those delivering or sharing the experience..." (AJA 2012:5) At the same time, it notes that due to the complexity of assessing such outcomes, quality of experience is not evaluated as a key performance indicator for the national portfolio organisations.

It is also important to recognise that different types of arts activities and projects will impact upon people in different ways, especially if we contrast for example public arts projects that are only viewed with participatory projects that involve collective creativity (White 2014). Our research involves both storytelling approaches in the context of exhibitions (e.g. museums), and also those in community and participatory arts projects. It is beyond the scope of this research to systematically compare the different cultural values of such initiatives, and our focus is mainly on identifying commonalities in terms of the relationship with empathy, compassion and understanding.

There is a growing body of evidence relating to the benefits of taking part in community and participatory arts, with a particular focus on the concept of 'wellbeing'. One of many possible examples includes Hallam et al's (2014) exploration of participation in music making leading to increased emotional and cognitive wellbeing in older people. Also, Baker and Macdonald (2014) used song writing to enhance a sense of belonging in those with mental health problems, through a process of lyrical storytelling of their own experiences. The notion of flow became particularly important to the enhancement of overall mood. Baker and Macdonald (2014) report participants leaving feeling more relaxed and happier than when they arrived.

Closely linked to health and wellbeing is the concept of social capital, and arts participation is a recognised way of developing social capital. Social capital is most simply defined as "connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (Putnam 2000:19). Putnam distinguishes between 'bonding' and 'bridging' forms of capital; 'bonding' capital is the sort that may be seen between close-knit groups of family and friends, generating social solidarity and specific reciprocity. By contrast, 'bridging' capital is the sort that links individuals to wider networks (and is thus potentially of particular interest for our

research). In Matarasso's influential evaluation of the social impact of arts participation (1997), a range of personal and social benefits were detailed, many of which could be implicitly linked to the concept of social capital, such as 'developing networks and understanding' and producing 'social change which can be seen, evaluated and broadly planned' (Matarasso 1997:6). Moreover, some later studies demonstrate more explicit interest in the concept. In the 'Better Together Report' (2000), which discussed strategies to increase community engagement and social capital, a whole chapter of the report was devoted to the arts and social capital, and it suggested that "the enjoyable nature of the arts makes them perhaps the most promising, if neglected, means of building social capital" (p.5). In exploring the links between older people's social capital and arts participation, Reynolds (2011) offered qualitative understandings of the ways in which arts-generated social capital is experienced and invested by older people, highlighting the dynamics of mutual support and reciprocity that stem from group arts activities. Jensen (2013) explores the significance of arts-generated social capital in empowering people with a range of mental health problems. In all of these examples, we may derive some implicit links to our key concepts of empathy, compassion and understanding, but they are not addressed directly.

Ozcan et al (2011) suggest that the qualities one finds in the highly empathic person are in many cases similar to those of the gifted artists and it is this that we need to unravel to begin to harness this ability in others. How do we improve people's empathic fitness levels, whilst drawing on the analogy of English (2012) cited in (D'Alessandro and Frager 2013) that the theatre is an empathy gym where we can go to practice our powers of empathy and compassion? Studies with a particular emphasis on arts and empathic development tend to be based in educational contexts. Examples of this include literature based courses to increase empathic engagement in medical students. Ecphrastic poetry has been used with school children to enable them to empathise with Jewish children of the holocaust enabling them to safely 'enter the terrain' of human suffering and expanding their circle of empathy (Gorrell 2000). Phillips (2003) suggests that identification and imagination (two dimensions of empathic engagement) are major concepts found in all arts curricula. Gorrell (2000) discusses no longer being concerned with principles of design in her classroom but the construction of 'meaningful' experiences, an appreciation of other human beings.

The recent Arts Council publication 'The Value of Arts and Culture to People and Society' (Arts Council England 2014), similarly focuses a brief discussion about empathy and related concepts on young people in education. They draw on a number of sources of evidence to suggest the importance of arts participation in contributing to what are known as 'soft outcomes' for children, which include the development of emotional and social skills and the management of personal relationships. In particular, they draw upon research by Winner, Goldstein and Vincent-Lacrin (2013) who suggest that participation in drama can improve young people's abilities to understand other people's perspectives through considering the motivation and behaviour of characters they are playing. Also discussed in the Arts Council report is research by Goldstein (2011) who explored how empathy and other socio-cognitive skills developed in young people who spent a year undertaking various forms of arts training. In making links to the value of arts and

culture in terms of citizenship and “outward-looking social confidence and connectedness” (p.37) the Arts Council report also concludes that there is a need for further research into the ways in which “arts interventions influence psychological processes and whether there is anything distinctive about the arts when compared to other activities...” (Arts Council England 2014:37)

A further example of arts work with young people that focuses on empathy (and again uses narrative approaches) is that of Big hART projects in Australia, whose stated aim is ‘to empower communities through arts’ (Wright et al 2013). This community of artists seek to work against coercive power and to enable the young participants of their art projects to re-story their lives and to re-imagine alternative futures to those offered by what is termed ‘un-limited maladaptive economic expansion’. Wright et al (2013) discuss how changing the stories that young marginalised people could tell about themselves also changes the way participants viewed other people through dissolving stereotypes. In this study changes were also seen in regard to levels of empathy, tolerance and respect for other. This research posits that such diffuse outcomes are particularly powerful in the way they add ‘value’ to addressing government policies and provide creative solutions to intractable social issues (Wright et al 2013).

In discussing the ways in which arts projects contribute to the development of empathy, we see within the community and participatory arts literature a conceptualisation of art as a bridge or a means of connecting communities or people (Williams, 2008, Philips 2003, Ozcan et al 2011).

“Here the artist creates the bridge that joins people otherwise alone. Art gives us a means to create community, to connect to each other. It allows us freedom to imagine things as they could be otherwise.”

(Phillips 2003:48)

Williams (2008) describes comics as the perfect medium for crossing boundaries and creating empathy, whilst Ozcan et al (2011) suggest that expressive processes act like a bridge to gain awareness and connections between people. Such notions are of particular interest for us in this research project as we are focusing on the potential of arts and culture to link *distant geographical communities* in ways that foster empathy, compassion and understanding. Thus, we are examining the potential of arts and culture to generate empathy with social others beyond the immediate community or culture, promoting the development of what has been termed ‘weak social ties’, those ties that extend beyond the ‘strong’ ties of family and immediate community and which are vital in promoting social change and adaptability.

Overall, therefore, we find that to date there has been little literature that focuses on the value of art and culture in relation to empathy, compassion and understanding. There are an increasing number of studies that examine more generally the positive impact of taking part in arts and culture, particularly in relation to health and wellbeing, including social capital, but those that focus explicitly on empathy tend to be limited to young people in education. The relationship with ‘compassion’ and ‘understanding’ is largely

unexplored. Moreover, there is currently an evidence gap more widely about the personal and emotional impact that arts and culture can have on people (particularly in relation to health) and it has been suggested that more in-depth qualitative methods may be most appropriate for addressing this gap in our knowledge (Arts Council England 2014: 39). The overall aim of our research is thus to improve our understanding of the potential of arts and culture to develop reflection and empathy across geographical divides. This aim is underpinned by two questions:

- 1) Why would we choose the medium of arts and culture to link distant geographical communities in ways that foster empathy, compassion and understanding?
- 2) How can we design and evaluate arts and cultural activities in ways that better recognise and demonstrate their value in terms of empathy, compassion and understanding?

In the next section of the report, we turn our attention to the methodology and methods that were used in this research project.

Research Design and Process

We adopted a qualitative research design (including creative methods) and a highly inter-disciplinary and participatory approach to our research project. We undertook focus groups and individual interviews in and around Stoke-on-Trent, involving a total of 40 participants. We created spaces for participants to talk about and reflect upon their work, in groups and in one-to-one discussions with researchers. We commissioned a film maker to produce a series of films about the research to be shared on the project website and on social media. The films are designed not only to document the project, but also to contribute to on-going discussions on the research topic and to provide a useful resource to artists and creative practitioners in terms of planning and evaluating their work. Our participatory approach included establishing a 'working group' of academics and creative practitioners that met to cross-check the findings and to work together to refine the research questions and to develop new resources for the design and evaluation of arts activities in ways that better demonstrates their value in terms of empathy, compassion and understanding. The case study of Stoke-on-Trent and Lidice was an important aspect of the research design. It was a useful frame of reference in interviews and focus groups, and the research visit to Prague and Lidice was a valuable opportunity to gain new insights into the research questions, and included three further interviews with participants in the Czech Republic. Each of these activities and approaches is discussed in greater depth in this section of the report.

The project received ethical approval from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Creative Technologies at Staffordshire University in February 2014. It was therefore conducted with full consideration given to issues of confidentiality, anonymity and informed consent. Since people were contributing to the project in relation to their professional roles (both academics and creative practitioners), we discussed with them the ways in which they wished to be acknowledged in the report. The vast majority of participants wished to be acknowledged as having contributed to the research. We also agreed with participants that any quotes would be attributed using a role that was specified by them on their consent pro formas in order to contextualise their comments. As well as providing written information about the project to UK participants, we also had information sheets translated into Czech. Permission was also obtained for filmed interviews and the use of photographs.



(L-R: Filmed interview with The Cultural Sisters; Ann O'Sullivan interviews public artists Nicola Winstanley and Sarah Nadin)

Focus Groups and Interviews

In designing our research, we were aware that issues of empathy, compassion and understanding are relevant across a range of academic disciplines. This is clear both in the academic literature and also through our own discussions with colleagues working in a range of different subject areas. Given the limited literature on the relationship between arts and culture and empathy, compassion and understanding, we wanted to draw upon a range of academic expertise. We felt that it would be valuable to explore how people engage with these issues in their own subject areas, as researchers, lecturers, and – in many cases – also as practitioners. Thus, not only was our research team inter-disciplinary, but we also drew on a much wider range of disciplines through our participant recruitment strategy. Moreover, given that virtually everyone takes part in some kind of arts and cultural activities, we wanted to explore how the multi-disciplinary group of academics might reflect on issues of cultural value in terms of their own everyday experiences. We recruited participants through direct emails and by sharing information about the project on university news feeds.

In involving academic participants, we undertook one focus group (with four participants) and eight individual interviews. The focus group took place in March 2014, and the interviews between February and June 2014. Participants included Lecturers in journalism, photojournalism, history, English and Cartoon and Comic Arts. There was also a Health Researcher, a Professor of Physical Geography, a Lecturer and Research lead in Holocaust Archaeology, a Lecturer in Community and Participatory Arts, and a Research Psychologist. We undertook to include as wide a range of subject areas as possible, and in particular to involve subject areas in which the topics of empathy, compassion and understanding would be especially relevant (e.g. psychology). Two of the interviews with academics were also filmed.

Alongside engaging with academic participants, we also ran further focus groups and undertook individual and group interviews involving artists and creative practitioners. We felt that they would be able to contribute significantly to the research questions. We knew that issues of empathy, compassion and understanding were of central importance in the practices of artists who work with people in particular, but that the focus was an implicit one rather than explicit. We therefore hoped that by providing an opportunity for artists to get together to reflect on their practice in relation to the key research issues, then we would gain valuable insights into our research questions. It is also important to note here that just as some academics were actively involved in community and participatory arts work, many artists and creative practitioners could also be described as 'academics', being actively involved in a variety of research work, teaching, and often published authors. The distinction between academics and creative practitioners was therefore mostly relevant only in terms of recruitment, and to some extent in the focusing of the interview questions.

We circulated information about the project via email networks, and were overwhelmed by the positive response from a wide range of artists and creative practitioners who were highly keen and enthusiastic about taking part in the research. We had originally

proposed to involve ten artists in one focus group: instead, we ran two parallel focus groups involving a total of 14 participants (in March 2014), and we also involved a further 14 participants in individual and group interviews (these took place between March and July 2014). Some of the interviews were filmed. All of the focus groups were around 90 minutes long, and the interviews were generally between 30 minutes and an hour. One focus group participant also took part in a group interview at her place of work, and three focus group participants also agreed to take part in filmed interviews. In total, there were six filmed interviews with artists and creative practitioners, involving a total of 11 people, as some people were interviewed on film together. We felt that the level of interest in and commitment to the project confirmed the extent to which artists and creative practitioners place significant importance on issues relating to empathy, compassion and understanding. The 28 artists and creative practitioners came from a wide range of backgrounds and roles, including: community and participatory artists; public artists; theatre professionals; writers; visual artists; photographers; museum curators, assistants and managers; a Local Authority Culture and Events Manager; filmmakers; an artistic director and a local historian.

All of the interviews and focus groups were semi-structured, using a topic list as a guide. Questions for academics focused on people's understanding of empathy and compassion and how their understanding was applied in the context of their work. This was applied especially to the ways in which people engaged in storytelling as part of their work. We asked them to talk about the last arts or cultural event that they had taken part in that they had found particularly moving, and to reflect on why it had affected them in this way. Discussions also explored occasions on which an international news item had prompted people to take some kind of action in support of others. Finally, we drew upon people's expertise as researchers to contribute their ideas about how we can better evaluate arts and cultural activities in ways that demonstrate their value in terms of empathy, compassion and understanding. In addition to addressing similar topics with the artists and creative practitioners, we also asked them about how they currently address issues of empathy, compassion and understanding in their work, focusing on a 'plan, do and review' project cycle. We included such a focus to contribute to the development of resources for the design and evaluation of arts activities.

The interviews were undertaken in a conversational style, allowing participants to focus on issues that they felt were important in relation to cultural value. In some cases, narrative data emerged from the interviews, as people reflected on cultural value through the telling of particular stories based on their experiences. As Morgan in Jupp (2006:121) notes, the most effective focus groups involve participants who are as interested in the topic as the researchers are, enabling a 'free-flowing exchange' in which people can share and compare their thoughts on a topic. This enables a range of responses on a research topic to be heard and understood, providing data not only 'on *what* the participants think, but also explicit insights into *why* they think the way they do'. This was very much the case in our focus groups; the discussions were enthusiastic, in-depth and insightful. Several people contacted the research team afterwards to express how valuable they had found the discussions, and one participant wrote a guest entry for the project blog reflecting on the issues raised. Many participants were also

keen to be involved in the working group meetings, which enabled the discussions to be further explored and developed.



(L-R Filmed interview with the team at B Arts; Research team talking to artists and creative practitioners over lunch at the Mitchell Arts Centre)

Working Group

Following on from the discussions in the focus groups, a working group of academics and creative practitioners met together in April and May 2014 to talk about the emerging findings from the research and to work out new strategies for the design and evaluation of arts activities in order to better capture their value in relation to those key issues. This kind of collaborative approach is influenced by the principles of community research, particularly through involving the 'community' of artists and creative practitioners working in and around Stoke-on-Trent. Community research, as defined by Goodson and Phillimore (2012: 4) involves utilising 'community-based knowledge' in order to:

"...create new knowledge for the purpose of deepening our understanding or building theory about a particular community or issue, or to stimulate action-orientated outcomes and policy change."

The active involvement of two of the university research team in community and participatory arts related practice further strengthened this approach due to the sharing of common ground and experiences.

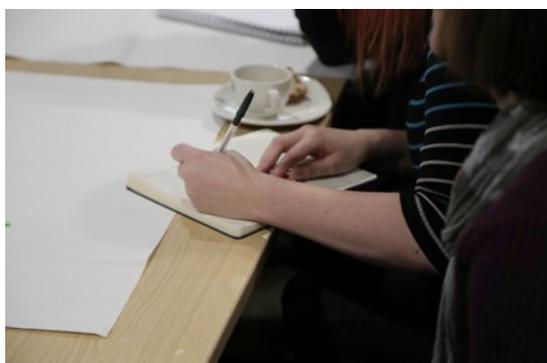
The working group met on three occasions; whilst not everyone could make every session, there were overall a total of 12 participants who worked with the research team. A range of presentations, discussions and activities took place at the working group meetings. These were all designed to actively involve the group in addressing the research objectives. Activities included:

- Presentations on emerging findings.
- Discussions about emerging findings, focusing on exploring the key themes in greater depth.
- Review of existing resources and practice for the design and evaluation of

participatory arts activities and discussions of what 'works'.

- Discussion of individual case studies.
- Developing new resources for the design and evaluation of participatory arts projects, based around the 'plan, do and review' project cycle.

Again, participants brought a wide range of experiences and backgrounds to the group, which prompted lively debate. The meetings were very helpful in terms of challenging some of the research team's assumptions, and offering alternative interpretations of the emerging findings. It also enabled a strong focus on understanding the types of resources that would actually be *useful* to people in their practice. For example, we discussed the idea of creating some kind of 'toolkit'. The overall consensus, however, was that this would be of limited value, and that the main resource that people found helpful was that of talking to other people, including other artists. This led directly to us commissioning additional work from the film makers to create a series of short films in which artists share their own practices in terms of considering empathy, compassion and understanding at each stage of the project cycle. In addition, the working group discussions were helpful in shaping the planning of the research visit to Lidice. An account of the research visit, which involved members of the working group as well as the research team, is given in the next section of the report.



(The Working Group discussing emerging findings at the Mitchell Arts Centre in May 2014)

Filming

Our decision to include film making as part of our research project was driven by the need to reach wider audiences, including arts practitioners. We therefore wished to present our research in a range of different formats (see Letherby and Bywaters 2007). In commissioning our film makers (Suzanne James and Darren Teale), we were clear that we wished to do more than simply document the project. The film makers themselves emphasised in our initial discussions that as artists, they wished to be actively involved as part of the research team, contributing to addressing the research questions as opposed to being 'detached observers'. This again reinforced the participatory ethos of the project. Throughout this account of our research design and process, we have highlighted various ways in which film was used as part of our approach, including filming interviews and working group sessions, and also the filmed research discussion in Prague that captured our reflections on the visit and the emerging findings. The whole visit to the Czech Republic was filmed, and part of the brief for film makers was to create a film that was aesthetically appealing as opposed to a straight forward documentary style. As the research continued, we recognised the value of the many hours of film that had been accumulated and that rather than producing one short film to disseminate the project, we could actually edit a series of eleven films that could be used as resources for creative practitioners. The working group discussions contributed to this decision by highlighting that creative practitioners would value such resources. The filmed resources that were produced as part of the research findings/outputs are detailed in full in the 'Resources' section of this report.



(Filming in Prague and Lidice)

Photography

Another creative research method that we used was that of photography. Our entire project was documented through photographs. Sarah Pink in Jupp (2006) discusses the range of ways that photography can be used as a research method. In our case, the visual content of photographs, especially during the trip to Lidice, provided information that could not be captured through discussions and observation. The photographs have resulted in the development of an exhibition and a photographic book of the project, which supports the development of our own narrative of the research project. This again enables us to extend our research to reach a wider audience. Further details of the photographic outputs can be found in the 'Resources' section of the report.



(Taking photographs in Prague)

Analysis

Our research generated a vast amount of qualitative data, including audio recordings from interviews and focus groups; many hours of film footage; notes and research diaries from working group meetings, and hundreds of photographs. The interviews and focus groups, including the filmed interviews, were transcribed. We then undertook a detailed thematic analysis, using a coding frame (Mason 2002). To make our approach as rigorous as possible, not only did we as members of the research team discuss and cross-check the emerging themes, but we also presented initial findings to the working group for their comments and input. This was particularly important due to the inter-

disciplinary nature of the research team, as each researcher was naturally influenced in their analysis by their own background in terms of discipline and practice.



(Working Group discussions)

The process of editing the film involved both the film makers and the university research team. Again, a very similar thematic approach was needed in order to put together the series of films, and the discussions with the film makers further helped to cross-check the findings. In putting together the films, and resources such as the Photo book, we also drew upon narrative/storytelling approaches to analysis (see Elliott 2005). The 'Caring Cards' resource that was developed as part of the research outputs (see 'Resources' section), not only required a thematic approach (with a focus on linking the findings to practice), but also involved the artist who designed the cards in developing artistic responses to the research findings. We see this as a unique and valuable aspect of our approach. Our research strategy has therefore resulted in the findings being presented in a range of formats, including written, visual art, photography and audio-visual. In the next section of the report we give an account of the research visit to Lidice, before moving on to present the findings from the interviews and focus groups.

Research Visit

An important part of the design of our project was a research visit to Lidice to attend the annual commemoration of the Tragedy, and to take part in the arts and cultural events that take place at this time. We based our research on a case study partly due to the great potential of the approach 'to illuminate the general by looking at the particular' (Denscombe 2003:30). In addition, as Yin (2009:18) suggests, case studies are a particularly valuable approach when 'the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident'. In this case, the phenomenon is cultural value in relation to empathy, compassion and understanding, and the context is the geographical locations of Stoke-on-Trent and Lidice. The approach also recognises that the challenges faced in terms of understanding and demonstrating cultural value are challenges that are faced by international partners rather than in the UK alone. The research visit was thus an opportunity for our group to consider the emerging findings from the research in relation to our case study, to exchange ideas with creative practitioners in Prague and Lidice, and to begin to formulate ideas for a new project to be informed by the outcomes of this research project.

The visit took place 12th-15th June 2014. The team who travelled out to the Czech Republic included Jackie Reynolds, Janet Hetherington, Kimberley Watson, Cathie Powell-Davies (visual artist working with communities), Suzanne James and Darren Teale (film makers).

Thursday 12th June

We stayed in Prague, which is around 15 miles from Lidice. On our day of arrival, we spent the afternoon exploring some of the well-known tourist spots in Prague, to orientate ourselves and to get a feel for the cultural heritage of the city. Our explorations were filmed, in order to capture the context of the visit.



(L-R Images from Prague: St Vitus Cathedral; Jazz band playing on Charles Bridge; Prague Love Locks)



(The Dox Centre for Contemporary Art; Janet Hetherington and Cathie Powell-Davies exploring the Frontline Exhibition)

Friday 13th June

Our first destination on Friday was the Dox Centre for Contemporary Art.² Their motto is in itself a reference to cultural value:

“In an age where growing numbers of people tend to think dangerously alike, art’s capacity to suspend, even for a moment, our habitual ways of seeing, may well prove to be of its greatest value.”

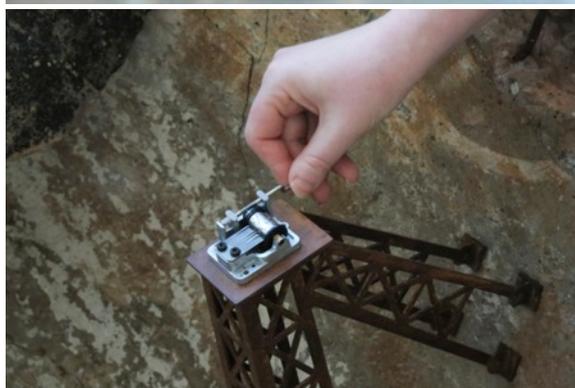
A new exhibition called ‘Frontline’ had just opened at the Dox, commemorating the 100 years anniversary of the beginning of World War 1. A large part of the exhibition was centred around people’s personal stories, which was perfectly in keeping with the focus of our research. Not only were we given permission to film in the gallery, but Zuzana Masna, PR and Development Assistant at Dox, agreed to be interviewed on film, about the exhibition. This was an excellent opportunity to include in the research the perspectives of a creative practitioner in the Czech Republic.



(Filmed interview with Zuzana Masna)

² <http://www.dox.cz/en/>

The main exhibition space contained an impressive site-specific installation by Slovak artists Bohuš and Monika Kubinský, in which two battle lines confronted each other. The first was a trench wall, evoking those of World War I conflicts, and the second was a line composed of fragments from authentic anti-aircraft bunkers from World War II. The anti-aircraft bunkers contained miniature musical boxes, with tiny handles for visitors to turn. As we looked around the exhibition, our responses to what we were seeing were filmed, which resulted in some interesting group reflections being captured as part of our research data.



(Images from the Frontline exhibition at the Dox Centre for Contemporary Art)

The second part of the exhibition, in the upstairs gallery, included diaries, drawings, photographs and other items from those who were involved in World War I. These artefacts had been donated after an open call on Czech Television as part of the making of a documentary series entitled 'Report on the Great War". There were also short films of family members of those involved being interviewed about the involvement of their ancestors. There were English subtitles, which made this a highly engaging part of the exhibition for our group. It was particularly interesting to see some of the informal photographs of troops in World War I, as these contrasted with the more typical formal shots of soldiers in their regiments.

The visit to the Dox Gallery was highly interesting, thought provoking and valuable for our research.

Later in the day, we travelled by metro and bus to Lidice, to explore the village and to take part in programme of commemorative events. We spent some time taking in the atmosphere of the village, and filming and photographing the different areas. We met Luba Hedlova, Curator of the Art Gallery in Lidice, and Ivona Kasalicka, Manager of the Lidice Memorial Museum, and attended a reception event hosted by the Mayor Of Lidice, Veronika Kelleroval. Civic representatives from Stoke-on-Trent were present and we were able to talk to people informally about the weekend ahead and about our research project.



(The bus stop and the Rose Garden)

A special part of the commemoration is an outdoor classical concert to honour the victims, survivors, and those bereaved by the tragedy in Lidice. Children's choirs began the concert by singing the National Anthem. The concert itself demonstrated the power of music to unite people of different cultures: we had no understanding of the language used in the concert, yet we were able to remain fully engaged in the performances and in the emotion of the occasion.



(The audience gathers for the commemorative concert at the Lidice Memorial)

After the concert the audience moved to stand in silence, looking out over the site of the original village. A candle had been lit at the site of each building in the village, and then the names of the 88 children who were deported from Lidice to concentration camps were read out over the speakers. This was an immensely poignant and moving part of the commemorative events.



(L-R Performers at the commemorative concert; Looking out across the candle-lit site of the original village)

Saturday 14th June

On Saturday morning we again travelled to Lidice from Prague for the Commemoration Act, which is the formal ceremony with military presence and visiting representatives from countries around the world. For our group, it was a time of quiet reflection and of simply being a part of this remarkable experience. When the ceremony had ended, we spent some time visiting other parts of the memorial site, such as the statue of the Children of Lidice, and talking to each other about the experience of being in Lidice and taking part in the commemorative events.

Saturday afternoon was spent with Luba Hedlova in the Lidice Art Gallery. Luba was filmed showing us around the gallery. Conversations were focused on the 'stories' and meanings that were linked to the art works, and also about the way in which the gallery runs; people's participation, and about future ideas for projects that we could work on collaboratively. We were also able to film an interview with Sylvia Klanova, whose mother had designed the remarkable statue of the Children of Lidice. The interview focused on the telling of her Mother's story, and on the ways in which the statue of the Children of Lidice had been seen to generate empathy and compassion across geographical divides.



(Clockwise from top left: Statue of the Children of Lidice; Interviewing Sylvia Klanova; The Lidice Gallery; Interviewing Luba Hedlova)

Sunday 15th June

On Sunday morning our group took part in a filmed research discussion on the balcony of the hotel restaurant. In doing this, we were experimenting with using film in a variety of different ways for the benefit of our research project. In particular, we felt that the discussions of the research team, in which the researchers reflect on and try to make sense of the data, was a valuable stage of the research process that is normally not captured. We therefore wanted to include the essence of some of our discussions in the project film. We ended our research visit with a little time to relax and explore the Old Town in Prague, before making our way to the airport for our return flight home. It had been an unforgettable experience and has contributed immensely to the outcomes of our research project.

Findings

In this section, we present the findings from the interviews, focus groups and working group meetings. The findings have also been informed by our reflections upon our research visit to Prague and Lidice, but the outcomes of the visit are revealed in greater depth in the project films, details of which are discussed in the 'Resources' section of the report. As we concluded in our literature review, the overall aim of our research is to improve our understanding of the value of arts and culture in developing empathy, compassion and understanding across geographical divides. Within this overall aim, there were two key research questions:

- 3) Why would we choose the medium of arts and culture to link distant geographical communities in ways that foster empathy, compassion and understanding?
- 4) How can we design and evaluate arts and cultural activities in ways that better recognise and demonstrate their value in terms of empathy, compassion and understanding?

As demonstrated throughout this report, we explored our research questions in relation to storytelling approaches in exhibitions and in community and participatory arts projects. This focus is rooted in our case study: the Story of Stoke-on-Trent and Lidice. We begin our findings section by examining people's interpretations of empathy, compassion and understanding and how they related these to arts and culture. This is important in order to operationalize these concepts when analysing the findings and translating them into resources for practitioners. Our findings then focus on the first research question of why we would choose the medium of arts and culture to link distant geographical communities in ways that foster empathy, compassion and understanding. We consider the way in which stories function in the context of arts and culture, and other issues such as the idea of a 'universal language'. In the final section of our findings, we address our second research question, considering our findings in relation to how we can design and evaluate arts and cultural activities in ways that better demonstrate their value in terms of empathy, compassion and understanding.

Empathy, Compassion and Understanding

We began all of our interviews and focus groups with a discussion of people's understanding of the concepts of empathy, compassion and understanding. This was essential in order to 'operationalise' these concepts when developing resources for the design and evaluation of arts activities in ways that better demonstrate their value in relation to these key concepts. Most participants focused much more strongly on the issue of empathy than those of compassion and understanding (as is also the case in the literature). Defining the concepts provoked much debate, both at the initial focus groups and at subsequent working group meetings. We emphasised in the literature review the complex, dynamic nature of concepts such as empathy; similarly, whilst there was close to unanimous agreement as to the significance of empathy and compassion within the arts, there was little agreement as to the meaning of these terms. Moreover, people struggled to articulate the deeper understandings and meanings that they attached to

them. This exchange in one of the creative practitioners' focus groups demonstrated this well:

Maybe its semantics, I don't know but it seems to me that it really hard to measure that, whether somebody just feels sorry for what happened. Is that empathy? I don't know. (Gallery Co-Director/Artist)

And that is exactly what we are grappling with. (Researcher)

It's not really semantics, it's about complexity. (Community artist/photographer)

Our findings suggested that the most common view of empathy is an emotional resonance or a perspective taking phenomena or a combination of the two. Perhaps in response to the complexity of the topic, participants tended to use two dominant metaphors that were coded visual or spatial.

- **Visual and Spatial Metaphors**

Visual metaphors tended to be suggesting of perspective taking dimensions and were based upon the idea of looking through the eyes of someone else or simply seeing things from their point of view

...empathy in effect is what happens when you find yourself looking at the world through their eyes without necessarily the will to do that....but you are suddenly looking at the world in a completely different way...(Health researcher)

Spatial metaphors incorporated a number of different elements that draw on the notion of being able to occupy the space of another or being able to move closer to the space that the person occupies hence our use of the term spatial. Some participants spoke directly of taking the position of someone else:

It's to do with your ability to be able to place yourself in some degree in the position of other people...(Community artist/photographer)

Others combined the spatial dimension with a suggestion that empathy also involves an emotional dimension:

I suppose empathy is where you are putting yourself in the position of someone and feeling those feelings. (Public artist)

This is suggestive of the two dimensions dominant in the literature whereby a spatial metaphor is representative of perspective taking with or without the emotional dimension. Spatial dimensions were also significant when participants attempted to draw distinctions between empathy, compassion and understanding:

Understanding is more like contextualising the situation. The other two are more an emotional response I think. Empathy is definitely like you say putting yourself in the place of that person. Compassion is that you can see it from a distance and have an emotional response to it but understanding is a bit more removed again and you can kind of contextualise everything that is going on in that situation and get an overview of it if you like. There are extreme distances if you like. (Museum Curator)

An idea that was discussed extensively was the spatial metaphor of 'standing in someone else's shoes'. Again, this was sometimes used as a simple spatial metaphor, but sometimes with an additional emotional dimension:

For me I felt like empathy is you are getting more involved with somebody so you are really trying to understand their situation and what they are going through...or how they feel or how they would react. Really putting yourself in their shoes. (Community Artist)

The idea of 'standing in someone's shoes' did, however, prove to be a controversial one, and it generated a lot of debate about to what extent it was really possible to stand in another person's shoes and truly understand their feelings. This led to alternative views of spatial metaphors combined with an emotional or a feeling dimension, but also involving a sense of movement (as opposed to simple spatial re-location). The idea of movement through space was found in the idea of crossing, connecting or bridging which is rather more dynamic and suggestive of a process that we can begin to deconstruct.

Crossing

...in a sense and empathy is kind of like crossing over from one area to another one... (Senior Lecturer: English)

Bridging

As I said earlier I am a midwife and the reason I was so interested in this project was, I think when I first saw those words, love, compassion, empathy and art there was this wonderful bridge ...(Multimedia artist)

Connecting

We do work with people who do horrible things to other people and something from working with people who do horrible things is that they seem to be withdrawn emotionally and to be cold and to have turned something off and we often talk about finding some spark in someone who is beginning to turn those things back on in which case, empathy is an ability to connect somehow or somewhere. (Director, New Vic Borderlines)

The above quotes suggest that empathy is in essence a connection or a bridging of space between people. One of our key findings in terms of cultural value is the potential of arts and culture to make those connections or build those bridges. Numerous creative practitioners in interviews and focus groups highlighted this, as the following quotes exemplify:

...at its heart is the idea that people connect through creativity, connect through art...(Theatre education practitioner)

...there is something very special about art which connects...[] the thing that bridges that huge gap is art...and not just one particular type of art, something that touches us not just intellectually which can make us feel...you are able to feel a connection...(Director, New Vic Borderlines)

...trust that empathy will happen if people are informed about things and people know...there is an internal set of values and connections within people that can be sparked by a catalyst like an art project... (Public artist)

People it seems have a capacity for connection but this is not going to happen without the 'catalyst' that is art or some cultural event and this is outlined clearly in the next quote.

...without that possibility without that platform...that context, that moment, that opportunity, that drive, that push, that nudge, that little time to sit down the excuse to do that it won't happen. It doesn't happen in society people can stand in a queue for the bank, people can sit on the bus together, people can go to college together but they don't have that reason to connect. What is the thing that is allowing those people to connect one with the other unless it is a shared artistic experience or a cultural experience...unless there is something to get that conversation going....(Artistic director)

The notion of arts as a catalyst is a crucial one in our research. It begins to address our first research question, of why we would choose the medium of arts and culture to link distant geographical communities in ways that foster empathy, compassion and understanding. In the next section of the findings, we explore the ways in which stories and storytelling can be a central idea in relation to arts as a catalyst.

Arts as a Catalyst: The Role of Stories

Having identified the idea of art as a catalyst, we were curious to discover more about how this actually happens. How does a particular art object or art/cultural event act as a catalyst to connect people and hence bring about some kind of understanding empathy or compassionate response? A strong theme that has emerged within our analysis is the idea of the 'story'. Participants often talked

about particular physical objects (in museums for example), as being a means of creating that connection, which is then operationalised through the notion of voice or story.

...it's about making sure that every time you are talking about something physical you are always connecting it to those voices...so when you see a picture or a tile from the gas chamber for example you have a witness description that accompanies it...its not just about objects and things and buried stuff it's about people...(Lecturer & Research lead, Holocaust Archaeology)

....the reason why we display things is that there's a story behind it....it's the story that people actually relate to rather than the object itself...it's hard to bring little pieces of metal to life in a meaningful way (Staffordshire Hoard)...people empathise with the human side of it...(Museum Interpretation Officer)

In order to further explore the notion of a story in relation to our findings, we turn our attention to one participant who asked if she could tell her 'cave story'. In a filmed research interview, she described in her 'cave' story as something of an epiphany in her practice. She recalls being taken into a cave to look at pre-historic cave art and how the guide suddenly held his torch in a particular way:

... the stalagmite that's directly opposite forms the top half of the bison in the shadow...then as he moves his torch the bison appears to run. And so you are suddenly transported back to what is clearly a story telling moment from millennia ago. You know thousands and thousands of years ago and it's just all for us. At that point it was the power of story-telling that suddenly came home to us....that moment of empathy that we were able to feel with those people explaining what had happened with this bison...(Artistic director)

Through the visual story of the bison running across the cave wall, this artist describes an empathic connection stretching across aeons and a realisation of the power of stories to create bridges, making a connection that allowed her to step into the hunter's shoes. The idea of stories as helping people to empathise with each other across and throughout time is also reiterated by another participant:

...so I do think you can tell a story honestly and compassionately people find that quite difficult to resist, just a simple story is probably the oldest and easiest way of helping person A to understand person B a little better...(Freelance writer, actor and teacher)

Our findings support the widely held recognition that storytelling is universal: it is something that all cultures engage in, and indeed the very self is a narrative construct. In our focus groups and interviews, we tended to ask participants about whether arts and culture have a 'super power' to develop empathy, compassion and understanding across geographical divides. Given our focus on storytelling, the

themes that were identified were very much about the power of storytelling within the context of exhibitions and community and participatory arts projects. However, we were also able to gain significant insights through the contributions of the multi-disciplinary group of academics who took part in the research.

Cultural Value: The Super Power of Stories

We found that the use of storytelling approaches in an arts and cultural context encouraged the development of empathy, compassion and understanding in a number of important ways.

- **Striking a chord....**

What is the power of a story to make connections or to enable empathy, compassion and understanding to develop? Our findings seem to suggest that stories are functioning in a number of different ways both to foster an empathic reaction and to counter those processes that negate an empathic response or make an empathic response highly unlikely. So rather than focussing on the content of stories we started to ask ourselves what stories do. We take an action orientation towards language, which suggests that stories are not just there to describe an outside reality but to bring about a transformation in those listening to the story or engaging with a storied event.

The first theme to arise from the data is that stories allow us to connect empathically with other people because it allows us to realise our **commonalities**. This is key to a process such as empathy where we are asked to stand in someone else shoes or to view the world from their perspectives. Recognising commonalities can only be an aid to such a process and it would seem that part of the function of stories is to engender this. Some people spoke of this in terms of stories 'striking a chord'. A public artist in one of the focus groups noted that it was easier to empathise with someone when you could recognise yourself in the subject. The participant below talks about a news story that she had a strong empathic response to because in essence it allowed the subjective self to recognise itself in the object of the story.

I remember one little boy that was trapped down a well for several days and they couldn't get him out and he slowly died. At the time I had a little boy of the same age. Even now I would feel emotional but my empathy was with the mum rather than with the little boy. And I think that's why empathy is always personal and sometimes it needs something to unlock it...(Senior Lecturer in Journalism)

This also demonstrates how people drew on their wider experiences of experiencing empathy in response to particular stories, and we can relate it to an arts and cultural context through the notion of something 'unlocking' a person's empathy, which brings us back to the idea of arts as a catalyst for doing so. It is also worth noting here the way in which people reflected on the

case study of Stoke-on-Trent and Lidice in terms of recognising that both places were mining communities and that this commonality was a key factor in motivating the citizens of Stoke-on-Trent to respond to the needs of the villagers of Lidice.

- **Empathies of Scale**

Another aspect of cultural value that was discussed was the way in which stories enable us to know the other person as an individual. That is, stories can individualise and this in a sense allows us to empathise in a way that would be virtually impossible with a large number of people. Empathic responses are therefore scaled in that we need to be able to see commonalities that we hold with a particular other. At the focus group involving academics, there was a discussion about storytelling in exhibitions and how this developed empathy through relating to people's individual stories:

...Its quite interesting at the Holocaust Memorial Museum in America that they...rather than lots of objects from sites, they have reconstructed all the photographs from one village of all the people. They actually personalise the story...[] It was quite interesting the way that they are represented in the museum form and the way that it personalises the holocaust (Lecturer & Research Lead, Holocaust Archaeology)

It was too huge six hundred were killed in the battle in Italy in 1944 but when you actually put it down to one person's story or details of their story....[] If you can actually identify with somebody it sort of makes it on a comprehensible scale. (Lecturer Photojournalism/History)

...when you go in there, there are twelve artefacts in glass cabinets and its not your traditional storytelling museum. It just said the person's name, their age and the fact that they were married or whether they had children and then it told an about their last days. So the one that absolutely got me was this guy was talking to his son and he just wanted to war to be over so he could go home and have chicken and chips for his tea. And that kind of just kicks you in the chest and I think that for me is the most powerful museum exhibition I have ever seen. It doesn't force you to have those stereotypes it actually made you realise that it was just a normal person... (Lecturer Photojournalism/History)

There is a sense that in the face of many such as the six million who perished in the holocaust or the millions who are dying currently of starvation we feel somewhat paralysed or overwhelmed. It seems that once you know someone's story and recognise the father, mother, or lover and locate them within a village or a family home it links into your immediate emotions as you begin to see the person in front of you.

Perhaps some of the most powerful examples of arts and culture generating empathy, compassion and understanding across geographical divides are those that present people's individual stories in a way that challenges stereotypical, negative constructs of particular groups as 'the other' within society. This can occur when the power of storytelling has been used in a less than compassionate way that encourages the drawing of boundaries between 'us and them'. It can easily be seen within political rhetoric, as a powerful scare tactic that is used to divide and pacify:

... Societies are compassionate up to their boundaries so who you put in your in and out group really determines where compassion ends. And politicians can manipulate where that boundary is quite easily which has been shown repeatedly in history ...(Health Researcher)

For political reasons, those constructed rhetorical boundaries may coincide with geographical boundaries, and community and participatory arts projects have been developed specifically to address this issue, by challenging the view of the stereotypical 'other' and encouraging people to understand and empathise with the individual. A team of creative practitioners from North Staffordshire based participatory arts organisation B Arts, who took part in a filmed interview, described one such example. They were running a project involving young asylum seekers and refugees who were new to Stoke-on-Trent. They developed a play that was based upon the stories of the people taking part in the project, which toured primary schools in Staffordshire. B Arts' Artistic Director explained how the project, called 'Reading the book of Freedom' was commissioned by the refugee support group, and that encouraging empathy and understanding was a specific part of the brief, addressing questions such as:

...why are all these people suddenly here?... why does it feel like the city's suddenly full of all these new people and new faces and what's happening? But without just a very, it being a very dry lecture about shifting geographical landscapes and something that your average 10 year old is just going to glaze over and not really take on board at all. So they asked us really to, that was the centre of the brief was please explain this situation, what's happening now in the city to these young people in a way that they will connect with it...

B Arts' Engagement Worker described the approach to storytelling that was used in developing the play:

...it wasn't going to just be retold straightforwardly like a documentary but it joined together with other people's journeys and stories to make a whole new story which had lots of different parts, some of it a little bit like a fairy story about some birds that was, his mother released it and went on a journey and also more, a more realistic story but an accumulation of everybody's story so they had that combination of being personally valued

and the opportunity that it was meaningful, they weren't just telling it to somebody on a bus, it had a purpose...

Built into the performance was an opportunity for conversations between participants and school children, which again enabled connections between individuals and individual experiences, and another B Arts' artist describes how they could tell that empathy had developed as a result of these connections:

...well the start of the show in the school hall...there was a distance between the audience and the staff and the performers. It was very clear that they were over there, they were here and then having seen the piece and listening to those stories and then had...that barrier between the two broken down to enable them to do a little bit of a workshop, talk to each other in groups. It was extremely hard to then stop that conversation. There was then no barrier between the two, no distance between the two and those conversations, the kids saying do you have fish and chips in your country? Whatever. Do you have television?

This clearly illustrates a number of the key points that we have identified about the value of storytelling approaches within arts and culture to enable the identification of commonalities and to encourage a focus on the individual in a way that challenges stereotypical portrayals of 'others' in society.

In short, the expression of the value and power of storytelling was ubiquitous. This was perhaps articulated nowhere more clearly than when one participant (a theatre education practitioner), pointed to its essential role for humanity. Asked if stories were key to everything she does, she replied: 'yeah, I think that they are because actually what we're ultimately trying to get at is humanity and what makes us human'. It is through the telling and exchanging of our stories that we develop the capacity to reflect upon and to make sense of our lives, and the lives of others.

Empathy across Geographical Distance

As well as the value of arts and culture in individualising experiences, and challenging stereotypical perceptions of the 'other' our findings also suggest a number of other important aspects of cultural value in terms of bridging geographical divides. One of these is the important issue of language. Whereas to some degree, the interconnected nature of our digital world means that geographical distance does not have to be the barrier that it once was, it could well be argued that the lack of a common language can be the most significant barrier to empathic engagement:

...language is a huge barrier because unless you can really express yourself and how you feel and what you have been through its very hard for someone else to really understand...[] I think language is often a barrier which is why quite often we'll find ourselves I don't know

drawn towards say North America than we are to our own European neighbours. (Theatre education practitioner)

In this context, a number of participants referred to the value of the arts as a kind of 'universal' language:

It's a common denominator isn't it, creativity? You know it's similar to I suppose you could liken it to food in the way that it brings people together. (Participatory artist)

I think if you are talking about crossing continents and people coming from all sorts of places to do art...[] I've found when I have worked with people who don't speak English as a first language it has a language of it's own. (Participatory artist)

The above quotes suggest that art and cultural activity is a common language but we need to unpack this a little further. We must ask if we are not communicating with a verbal language then how are we able to promote understanding and empathy? There is something inherent in the practice itself that it is able to tap into things that cannot always be put into words.

...it's why we are able to appreciate art that's made in other cultures and other parts of world. It's something that transcends boundaries and it's the reason why human beings are able to communicate because we share certain feelings and emotions and I think art really at its centre is about communicating those feelings so when you see something and you experience a piece of visual art...you are keying into something that is very human...(Theatre education practitioner)

...it's a good tool for communication because immediately people are talking from the heart not just from the head and they are connecting with things that they can't always be put into words...(Academic and community artist)

Our first research question asked why we would choose the medium of arts and culture to link distant geographical communities in ways that foster empathy, compassion and understanding. Our findings suggest that arts and culture can act as a catalyst; they have the power to connect people in a number of ways. Storytelling approaches in particular can 'strike a chord' with people, enabling them to find their commonalities. Stories can also help us to relate to people as individuals, challenging stereotypical ideas of the 'other', and offering a common language.

We will now turn our attention to our second research question, and what we have learned about how to design and evaluate arts and cultural activities in ways that better recognise and demonstrate their value in terms of empathy, compassion and understanding.

If you build it they will come

In our discussions with creative practitioners, we explored the ways in which they address (implicitly or explicitly) issues of empathy, compassion and understanding in their work. We interrogated the idea of whether you can actually plan for an empathic response, and this led to some interesting responses. The subheading for this section is taken from the film *Field of Dreams* where Kevin Costner plays Ray Kinsella and Iowa farmer who is told by a dis-embodied voice to plough over his crop and build a baseball field. 'Why?', he shouts 'why?' And the voice says 'If you build it they will come' asking him to have faith that by building this baseball field he will have one final chance of speaking to his dead father. It was this same degree of faith shown by our artists at the beginning of this project that if they undertook their work then empathy would come or follow. This seems to be the implicit nature of empathy that we wished to explore and make explicit.

...we feel it will bond people or build empathy or bring people together and I think you don't have to work very hard at that because it does happen quite naturally...[] and good stories will do that because they will have things that strike at the heart of people's feelings (Theatre education practitioner)

It seems that Ray had to build a baseball field to create a space and have faith that something will happen and our artists similarly felt that if a story was told or a space created to tell stories then stories would happen and empathy would occur. It is also important to note that to some extent at least, the idea of planning an empathic response was one that was perceived as having the potential to be unethical. In one of the focus groups involving creative practitioners, there was a lot of agreement when a theatre director suggested that artists have to 'park their own missions', and that the idea of manipulating audience responses was a dishonest one. A public artist agreed with this, reflecting on a project that she had undertaken related to the story of Stoke-on-Trent and Lidice, and commenting that: "We expected empathy, we trusted that empathy would happen and it did but we didn't plan for it." Interestingly, several people agreed that the more important thing to plan for was actually *understanding* as opposed to empathy. It was suggested that since most people have the capacity for empathy, then if artists did their job well and conveyed a message clearly, then empathy would result.

Creating the Conditions for Empathy

Having identified the significance of 'understanding' as opposed to 'empathy' in relation to the planning of projects, we were able to identify numerous ways in which the ways in which creative practitioners' work encourages greater levels of understanding, which then results in empathy and compassion. Several participants talked about the context of their work, and the need to be inclusive and to understand people's lives:

We have to understand our lives, we have to think about and understand the lives of the people we come into contact with. I think as artists we're good at observing and that observation in a way is nothing without a compassion or degree of empathy that would allow you to imagine what it might be like to experience what you might be observing. So I think that that means that all of that information helps us to develop work that fits the context that you're working in, to fit where you are. (Artistic Director)

This quote points clearly to the importance of the creative practitioner's *own* empathy and understanding in being able to create the conditions for empathy in the work that they do.

It was suggested that the artist's own values had often led them to do the work that they do, and the importance of demonstrating those values in practice was emphasised:

I suspect for a great many artists what they are actually doing is working on something which has had some kind of direct impact upon them, which develops their empathy and leads to compassion and a desire to work in that kind of way. What then seems to be important is having actually developed an idea for a project and perhaps got funding in some context in which to do it, is to ensure that how you are working on the ground, the ethics of the project are congruent with the empathic base of the project... (Community artist/photographer)

Creative practitioners also reflected on the ways in which they created warm and welcoming environments for participants and about the ways that they sought to bring people together and to create spaces for conversations and the sharing of stories. These findings can also be found in the resources for practitioners that have been created as part of this project. They are significant because they all point to the idea that creative practitioners can create the conditions for empathy, compassion and understanding to develop through the ways in which they plan and deliver their work. We also explored the idea of what creative practitioners hoped to achieve through doing so, which led to discussions of change and social action.

Social Action

As we highlighted earlier, arts and cultural activities can challenge notions of the 'other'. A number of creative practitioners referred to the work that they do with marginalised people in communities. In doing so, they apply their own empathy and compassion to understand the lives of the people that they work with. They also aim to provide opportunities for people whose voices are often not heard to share their stories, to develop understanding of people's individual experiences, often with the aim of contributing to some kind of social change:

...So the works focus is on people who are pushed to the edges for whatever reason and our ambition really is the idea of creating a community and change so it's not just about participating in arts projects because it makes you feel good, and its very important to feel good, it's about being able to identify the changes they would like to see or working with organisations and communities to bring about some positive change. (Director, New Vic Borderlines).

We found that creative practitioners invested a lot of time and thought into understanding the questions that needed to be addressed in the planning of their work:

We do spend a lot of time discussing what are the questions, so we might spend as long as an academic talking about 'so what are the questions here? What are really the questions that are going to get us to the right place, that are going to set the framework for the conversations?' and we do really pick at that quite severely. (Artistic Director)

These discussions also bring us back once more to the value of art as a 'catalyst' for change, and the ways in which the sharing of stories contributes to that change.

I think it's imperative that art is a catalyst especially out in the public realm or else it's just an object or a monument. It needs to demonstrate either an ideal or just demonstrate how a community feels and be a sort of totem in a way. (Public artist)

The same public artist was one of a number of people who discussed the issue of a 'legacy' of an arts event being very important, especially given the recognition that change might happen in the longer term, not just during the lifespan of a project.

Many of the definitions of an empathic response emphasise the importance of it leading to action rather than a passive reaction that leads to momentary recognition but no real social transformation. These findings are therefore crucial in illuminating the ways in which creative practitioners, whilst not necessarily planning for an empathic response, do work to create the conditions in which empathy and social action will result from increased understanding of people's stories.

Evaluating Outcomes

In asking people about how to best evaluate arts and cultural activities in relation to empathy, compassion and understanding, we encountered a broad range of perspectives. A Research Psychologist who took part in the research suggested that it would be possible to measure such outcomes:

I suppose that from an evaluation point of view you have to operationalise what you mean by empathy and compassion and understanding. And then start to think well how can we measure that? Would it be enough to have a set of questions with sort of points on the scale totally disagree to strongly agree sort of like a Likert scale.

However, other participants felt that it was difficult, if not impossible, to do so. One reason given was a lack of clarity in definitions (e.g. does a person feel sorry for what happened or do they feel empathy?). Another argument was that certain things are simply inexplicable. Others spoke of some of the difficulties caused by a potential time lapse between the exposure to an art or cultural event and an empathic response, and the difficulties of capturing that.

There was on the whole an antipathy towards the scaling of responses as suggested in much of the literature and a leaning towards more qualitative methodologies.

I think it's a very qualitative process. We have to gather other data as everybody does. The numbers of people involved, how often people are involved all of those things have to be collected. But I sometimes think the most interesting data comes really from what people say themselves. (Theatre education practitioner)

Another participant emphasised the importance of an inclusive approach to evaluation, involving a group reflection by everyone involved in the project. It was further suggested that qualitative approaches could overcome barriers to participation and encourage more imaginative and metaphorical responses:

As soon as they start talking about things in a more metaphorical way or using their imagination, they immediately start to break through those kind of barriers that we immediately put up by asking them their opinion. (Academic and community artist)

Again, participants returned to the idea of 'stories' and how these could also be gathered and shared as part of the evaluation:

When you said that the first thing that came into my head was actually speaking to people or perhaps seeing people on film or hearing from them. The people who have actually been involved in the projects I suppose. To hear their stories about how being involved in such a project the impact it has had on them and their lives would be interesting for us (Participatory artist)

Museum staff discussed various ways in which people could contribute their stories to include them as part of an existing exhibition. This highlights one of the advantages of including story-based evaluation as an integral part of the project design:

...the great thing about community arts, the kind of arts that engaged people is that you actually have the evaluation built into the very process of the project itself and not only that you not only get the project, you also get stage 1 and 2 of the action plan out of it because it's the whole process is engaging people, talking to them about their experiences, getting them to improve upon that and moving on. So it's actually built into the project itself. (Academic and community artist)

The same participant emphasised the value of creative approaches to storytelling, including digital stories:

I think not using the spoken or written word for example. Getting people to use other media such as photographs such as drawing maps, such as communicating through a whole range of images. ..[] you need to use creative methods because there is no other way of expressing it really [] getting people telling their own story being able to describe the impact that it's had on them, on their community...

Finally, a public artist discussed the ways in which one of her projects (based upon the story of Stoke-on-Trent and Lidice), had led people, unprompted, to submit poetry to the project website in response to the project. Some participants felt that this was an exceptionally meaningful demonstration of the value of a project.

Overall, therefore, we found that 'understanding' was a particularly significant concept in relation to designing arts and cultural activities in ways that better demonstrated their value in terms of empathy and compassion. This included understanding the contexts that people are working in and the lives of the people that they work with. The values of the creative practitioner themselves are central to this; they use their own empathy and compassion to effectively create the conditions in which further empathy can flourish. They tend to be motivated by creating some kind of social change, and the idea of arts as a catalyst and again the power of stories, are important in this respect. In terms of evaluating the outcomes of their work, participants felt that qualitative approaches were the most effective way of capturing the difference that the work had made, as it allowed for imaginative and metaphorical responses. Stories and creative responses could be used effectively as an integral part of the project activities, and the importance of inclusivity was emphasised. All of these findings have been used to inform a range of resources for practitioners, which will be discussed later in the report.

Discussion

In this section of the report, we return to the central concept of cultural value, and discuss the ways in which our research contributes to the aim of demonstrating the value of arts and culture in relation to empathy, compassion and understanding. We believe that the overwhelmingly positive levels of interest and participation in our research by artists and creative practitioners, is a finding in itself in relation to cultural value. We therefore begin this section by considering some of the responses from participants about why they wished to take part in the research and how they feel that it will impact on their future practice. With reference to literature and findings, we then consider the ways in which artists and creative practitioners were able to draw upon a range of roles and identities when reflecting on our key issues. We will discuss some of the tensions around whose voice is heard in discussing and defining cultural value, and we will argue that artists and creative practitioners have an important part to play. We also discuss some of the critical issues in relation to assessing the cultural value of storytelling approaches in the context of community and participatory arts. We will conclude this section by examining four cross-cutting themes, which again can be linked to both our data and to literature. The themes are 'arts as a catalyst'; 'connecting people'; 'sharing stories' and 'crossing geographical divides'. The significance of these themes in terms of cultural value will be discussed.

Understanding Cultural Value: The Role of the Artist

The artists and creative practitioners who took part in our research were representative of practitioners who used a range of art forms in both commercial and community contexts. Artists and academics were very clear in their reasons for engaging with the research and in some cases that engagement was quite extensive as they were asked to participate in individual interviews, focus groups and working groups. A number of participants stated that the reason for taking part was the story of Lidice that we had outlined in our information sheet: they had not heard the story of Lidice before and were keen to find out more. The story is an engaging one in that it explores two extremes, demonstrating perhaps the best and the worst that humans are capable of. The Lidice story is the story of working class people from Stoke-on-Trent standing together to do something really extra-ordinary that still impacts on the lives of people today and receives recognition in Lidice and, increasingly, in Stoke-on-Trent. One of the participants at a focus group for creative practitioners explained how the story had immediately made him reflect on issues of empathy and compassion:

I found it very compelling, this story and that was the first word that came to mind when I started to read it. It just instantly makes me think how would you feel in that situation. (Writer)

Engagement with the story of Lidice was also combined with an opportunity to meet other artists, practitioners, and academics and to discuss the issues of empathy and

compassion that many see as central to their work. Artworks (DHA 2014) has identified that many artists feel isolated in their work and that there are limited opportunities for professional development. Similarly, feedback from participants suggested that they had few opportunities to talk about their work, despite often feeling a need for advice, support and professional supervision. Our research provided an opportunity to take that which is implicit that is never spoken and to make it explicit. This was clearly articulated by a participatory artist in a filmed interview:

It was almost like when I got the email to say this project was happening, I was just so excited because I just thought empathy, compassion and understanding are essential parts of what we do but we've never even spoken about it really. (Participatory artist)

Several creative practitioners expressed a desire to get together a 'core group' of practitioners to discuss these issues more regularly.

I think having events like this happen regularly would be a really good thing and having a core group of people that like to come along and keep continuing to invite other creators along just to discuss matters like empathy and compassion...It would be a really really good thing... (Public artist)

The same public artist also felt that taking part in the research had influenced the way that she thought about her own future practice:

I think it's changed the way I think about my practice because this idea of getting together with other creative minds and discussing a subject like empathy and compassion has been an incredibly interesting tool to self-evaluate really and to think about where I might go with my practice further down the line.

Our findings confirmed our initial perception that empathy, compassion and understanding are something of a 'taken for granted' aspect of cultural value. This indicates that time and space for such reflection is an important element of practice if the value of art and culture in promoting empathy, compassion and understanding is to be made explicit. This is clearly shown in the following quote; what is taken to be obvious is often veiled from scrutiny and it is only by 'shining a light' on it that we can begin to unpack it:

In a sense it has shone a light on that way of looking at the work that I wouldn't have done necessarily before because as I say it just seems obvious but then sometimes with the really obvious you have got to unpack them a bit... (Freelance writer, actor and teacher)

Taking part in the research thus led people to address these key issues more explicitly in the planning and evaluation of their work, thereby also helping them to better articulate to others the value of their work.

Whilst some participants focused exclusively on their working roles, other people's contributions revealed the influence of other factors and identities in their lives, such as caring responsibilities within families and communities, and volunteering activity. Moreover, the freelance nature of arts work often requires artists and creative practitioners to take on additional work, such as working in social care posts and education. For example, we noted in our findings chapter the idea that some people may be drawn to work in community settings in response to the direct impact of a particular issue on their lives, and the ways in which this had shaped their values. This meant that people could usually draw upon a range of perspectives with regard to empathy, compassion and understanding. However, artists and creative practitioners were not always forthcoming about these experiences, perhaps for fear of sounding unprofessional. This sense of a broad range of personal and professional perspectives was mirrored in the academics- many of whom saw themselves as having other identities broader than their area of professional expertise.

Participants would sometimes seemingly inadvertently refer to the 'other' roles, which they adopted, and could make links with their creative practice. Just as our research highlighted the value of sharing 'hidden' stories through arts and cultural activities, we similarly felt that there was a hidden story to be heard in relation to the professional experiences of artists and creative practitioners. Thus, as Bourriaud (2010:6) argues, the 'abolition of the barriers between the actor and the spectator, and between the producer and the consumer' is a key issue. Our findings suggest that the sharing of stories during creative work began to blur these boundaries. This led artists and creative practitioners, especially in the context of community and participatory arts and socially engaged arts work, to reflect upon their roles both as socially engaged artists and as citizens within their communities. This could help explain why artists and creative practitioners generally reacted negatively to using a measurement based values system as they felt it often did not take into consideration some of the values which underpinned their practice and which was concerned with broader inequalities they sought to address in their work, as well as their own experiences. As the working group research progressed, and trust and camaraderie grew, our findings and observations suggest that participants became comfortable to assess and benchmark the cultural value of their work in relation to other experiences in their lives.

Another dimension of artists' experience that was touched upon in the findings was that of their relationship with commissioners. Recently, *Opportunities for Alignment* (Bagwell et al 2014) presented emergent findings from research concerned with the relationship between commissioners and providers. The findings emphasised the importance of nurturing a healthy workforce, which takes into account the cultural value of empathy, compassion and understanding at all stages of the planning process. The research participants supported this idea and suggested that tools were needed to assess the work and understand the value of the work which takes place before and after the creation of the work. Artists had different experiences of how commissioners and purchasers of their work influenced their interpretations of empathy, compassion and understanding in the context of the work. Whilst recognising the cultural value of their own work, some artists felt that the concept of cultural value was applied mainly by

commissioners and funders, using measures applicable to their professions and not necessarily capturing what the artists felt were at the essence of their creative work. On the other hand, participatory artists from one organisation discussed the positive influence of one of their funders, in that they had brought a new perspective developing understanding relationships with project partners:

They encourage kind of really in depth relationships between people who are all working towards the same things and that learning and that understanding the different perspectives really enabled us to shape a project that we wouldn't necessarily have done in isolation without that push (Engagement worker)

Our research focused primarily on engaging artists and creative practitioners (albeit some of them also had commissioning experience); future research may wish to further our explorations concerning the role of the commissioner in assessing cultural value. It could also explore how artists and creative practitioners perceive professional boundaries as well as identifying the external influences that may shape how they perceive empathy, compassion and understanding.

One example of the need to understand the boundaries of the creative process (and the implications of this in terms of cultural value), can be seen in relation to storytelling. Contemporary participatory arts practice has professionalised storytelling approaches (Wilson 2006) resulting in artists and creative practitioners embarking upon a rigorous research processes when developing their work, akin to that used by academics. This was supported by our findings, which clearly highlighted the extent of the research and other planning activities that contribute to any activities or projects. Both the literature and our findings therefore identify that this process of research is an important component of cultural value (see also Consilium 2003). Thus, whilst the artwork itself can often use a story and have significant cultural value in terms of empathy, compassion and understanding; our findings have challenged the boundaries of the creative process. We have demonstrated that, in order to understand its cultural value, it is important to look at the wider experience when assessing any work.

Another issue in relation to understanding the cultural value of storytelling approaches stems from recognising the political significance of stories. The literature suggested that narratives emerge within a 'complex fluid matrix of co-authored selves' (Ochs and Capps 1996:23). In some cases, we identified that artists had experienced a narrative sickness (Gorrell 2000), whereby they had reluctantly 'accepted' the rhetoric of the funders and the partners who they worked with. The result of this was that they developed 'alternative' narratives and vocabularies to describe their work, which were often at odds with how they would have chosen to explain their work and over time these different narratives became entwined. The story of Lidice was a good example of this: the story of the massacre at Lidice and the subsequent cultural exchanges associated with it, were stories that had been repurposed by different political systems over the course of history, and this impacted how the story was told today. Some of the potential tensions in the telling of the story of Stoke-on-Trent and Lidice were discussed by a focus group participant:

I thought the Lidice campaign was very interesting in this regard because obviously a really terrible story was at the base of it but allied with something that made the city - this city that didn't go through that really terrible story - feel really good about itself so there's almost these competing interests in a way... (Gallery Co-director/Artist)

This view led to further discussion about the extent to which the story is about commemoration, celebration of the links across geographical distances, and the intertwining of past and present. The discussion highlights some of the external influences upon artists and creative practitioners when independently demonstrating cultural value, especially in relation to the sensitive nature of the research themes and across both geographical and cultural divides. Further research is needed to explore ways in which such competing interests can be accommodated without hearing some voices but silencing others.

An interesting focus that emerged was a tendency to use the arts to tell stories focusing upon hardship, struggle and inequalities. Perhaps using Lidice as a case study in this context encouraged artists and creative practitioners to associate the cultural value of arts and culture in terms of empathy, compassion and understanding, with stories which tended to have negative or traumatic connotations. Moreover, it was also noted that the words empathy, compassion and understanding are actually rarely applied to people whose circumstances appear favourable:

...I was talking about the way we talk about these terms and largely we don't talk about being compassionate and empathetic and understanding of people who are in largely well off situations, so we don't talk about it in terms of the family that is 2.4 children, very happy and both parents are very loving to their children. We don't talk about it in those terms, we largely talk about those ideas in terms of people who are struggling and I think that's interesting. (Gallery Co-director/Artist)

Participatory and community arts has a long relationship with working with people whose voices often weren't heard (Crehen 2011), and evidently people felt that there was value in this approach to working. References to more positive stories and celebrations were fewer, but nevertheless these findings revealed how we can learn more about cultural value in terms of empathy, compassion and understanding, if we recognise that empathy can be more widely applied:

...empathy isn't just about looking at the sorrowful, it's about celebrating because it comes back to the definition of the word empathy and how you read that empathy. To me, it's having a connection to a person or a thing or situation and it's that connection which can be joyful or it can be sorrowful. But it's just an understanding and a connection that you have so it doesn't have to be a morbid thing, it can be a celebratory thing as well. (Museum curator)

White (2014:5) refers to the drive to align the value of community based arts and health to more traditional measures of assessment in order to demonstrate their therapeutic effects. In doing so, he argues we ignore the way in which the arts offer us 'new ways to appreciate the value of the work and offered us different ways of appreciating the cultural value of the creative experience'. Future work exploring cultural value in terms of empathy could therefore focus on incorporating positive and celebratory stories and experiences that examine the concept from a wider perspective.

We believe that artists and creative practitioners have an important role to play in the on-going work to understand and demonstrate cultural value, and that their perspectives and priorities should be incorporated into future research into cultural value. The resources that we have developed from this project have thus been designed to include artists and creative practitioners in the debate and may be used as the basis for future research.

Understanding Cultural Value: Key Themes

We would now like to explore a number of key themes that emerged from the research, both in the review of the literature and in our own findings. These are cross-cutting themes, and whilst they are evident throughout the research, they are encapsulated in one particular quote that describes a project called 'Unearthed', which involved community members in contributing to a piece of public art commemorating the role that the miners of Stoke-on-Trent played in re-building Lidice. As part of their involvement, each person undertook to re-tell the story of Stoke-on-Trent and Lidice to at least two other people. One of the public artists who led the project made this comment (our emphases):

For that, we worked directly with 3000 people in the city, in the country and across the world and probably hit between 10-15,000 people by asking people **share the story** of Lidice and register their promise to share with us to then go on to the sculpture itself. So the building of **the sculpture was a catalyst** to **share the story** to promote knowledge and understanding with the hope that empathy and compassion would result. Invaluably it did and it knocked [us] for six and really finding out just how powerful the process of promoting through the arts and increasing people's knowledge **in the immediate area and across the world** and what impact that had on individual people because we had a lot, thousands of comments left on the website... And it **sparked a new focus** direction in our work and so we are very interested in the power of art work **to connect people** and I think empathy and compassion is a very strong way of doing that. (Public artist)

In this account, we can uncover a narrative that demonstrates the potential cultural value of a project: the narrative is that the art is a catalyst, that enables the telling of a story, that connects people in the immediate area and across the world. The themes of art as a catalyst; connecting people; sharing stories and crossing geographical divides are inter-connecting rather than linear, but we feel that these four themes are highly significant in terms of cultural value, and that they run strongly through our research.

They have helped to inform the development of a Conceptual Map (see Resources section) and we will explore them from a theoretical perspective in greater depth in forthcoming publications. However, for the purposes of this report we will briefly discuss each theme in turn:

- **Art as a Catalyst**

"It is common to read accounts of mass empathic collapse...Far less effort, however, has been put into documenting when empathy has bloomed on a collective scale – where whole communities have imaginatively stepped into the shoes of strangers, understood something of their suffering, and taken action to alleviate it."

(Krznaric 2014:170-171)

This theme is very closely linked to the idea of social action, as discussed in our findings chapter. In our literature review, we referred to Megan Boler (1997), who critiqued the emphasis placed on the role of empathy 'as a means of educating the social imagination' (p.253). She suggests that there is an 'untheorized gap between empathy and acting on another's behalf' (p.255), and that it is more typical to see a kind of 'passive empathy' that does not meet the social change ambition. Thus, when we see another community suffering in some way, is it enough to just feel empathy? Or, as Hoffman (2000) would say, do we need to have this empathic distress converted to sympathetic distress such we are moved to help in some way? Human life is clearly about far more than just the passive observing and understanding of events: our evolution and flourishing requires that we endeavour to 'make things better' in some way. One of the striking themes that emerged from the interviews and focus groups was the desire amongst the art practitioners (particularly those working in participatory contexts) for their art to contribute to this process, to make a difference. Moreover, we have seen in the findings some of the ways in which this is linked to the values of the artist, their motivation for doing the work, the groups that they work with, and how they design and implement their projects.

Roman Krznaric (quoted above), proposes an 'empathy revolution', in which we recognise 'that empathy can be as much a collective phenomenon as an individual one' (Krznaric 2014:169). Our research participants suggested various levels of individual and collective action that they might hope for from people taking part in their projects, but the overall perception was that experiencing an arts event or activity is not just about having a good time: it should be a genuinely positive experience that might give more people a voice; open up more choices; motivate people to think and to write, or challenge people. As one participant said: 'action is really key'. There was recognition that the change might not happen immediately, reinforcing our theoretical understanding of empathy as a process rather than an outcome. This also linked in to discussions of the legacy of an arts event, that allowed for unexpected outcomes and longer-term impact.

We therefore find that the potential of the arts to act as a catalyst to individual and collective action is an important dimension of cultural value. However, this requires evidence and critical understandings of the nature of the empathic response, given the concerns about the limitations of 'passive empathy'. This finding has helped to inform our evaluation resources (presented in the next section of the report), and we believe that further research is needed to provide evidence of the nature of the actions and changes that are prompted by the arts participation, including longer-term changes.

- **Connecting people**

In the literature review, we referred to the concept of social capital and identified some of the existing literature that suggests, implicitly or explicitly, the value of arts participation in generating social capital. In terms of empathy, compassion and understanding, we have found a substantial overlap between the language used to explain these processes and the language used in theoretical discussions about social capital. In particular, the notion of a 'bridge' was repeatedly used by participants when explaining their understanding of the process, and we can also see it in literature on compassion (e.g. Nussbaum 1996), and in the social capital literature (e.g. Putnam 2000). Moreover, the discussions about the ways in which we are inclined to feel compassion for those that we know, but not for those that we don't (Nussbaum 1996) also resonates with distinctions between 'bonding' social capital (with those who are similar to us), and 'bridging' social capital (with those who have different characteristics to our own).

The concept of social capital is rooted in the relationship between individuals and communities, and it is therefore strongly linked to the previous discussion about arts as a catalyst in terms of social action. The findings have strongly emphasised the importance of creating spaces for conversations, whether that is amongst participants in arts projects, to develop shared understandings and encourage empathy, or whether it is between people who are working in arts and cultural settings to discuss their work in terms of cultural value. Storytelling approaches, that have been found to be so important, clearly require people to similarly connect with one another, which again can generate social capital:

"Art creation often inspires valuable dispositions, including trust, openness, cooperativeness, tolerance and respect, and can be used as a tool to help creating social capital."

(Jensen 2013:205)

To date, whilst there is on-going interest in social capital as a dimension of cultural value, there are significant gaps in our knowledge. In particular, there is a lack of qualitative understanding of how people experience arts-generated social capital (Reynolds 2011), along with confusion about the application of the theory to practice.

Vella-Burrows et al. (2014) specifically addressed social capital in relation to cultural value and found that whilst professional participants unanimously supported the idea that arts and cultural organisations have a role to play in generating social capital and improving health and well being, there was generally 'a paucity of relevant evidence' to support their understanding (Vella-Burrows et al. 2014:40). Our research findings support the importance of social capital as a dimension of cultural value. They offer some new insights into the deeper emotional aspects of the connections between people, and of the role of storytelling, thus adding to our understanding of the nature of arts-generated social capital. However, we would support the findings of Vella-Burrows and colleagues in suggesting that more research is needed to understand and demonstrate the value of arts and culture in relation to social capital.

- **Sharing stories**

Our research project was inspired by the story of Stoke-on-Trent and Lidice, and the theme of stories and storytelling continued to be of the utmost importance throughout the project. In the literature review, we referred to Bauman (2004a, 2004b), and the ways in which power relationships enable some stories to be heard and accepted as 'truth', and other stories to be silenced, thus marginalising those whose stories remain unheard. In the interviews and focus groups, we heard real-life examples of how such issues had been challenged in the context of arts and cultural events and activities. For example, we heard a powerful account of B Arts' work with young asylum seekers and refugees and how a project involving performance and two-way dialogue in schools had successfully contributed to shared understandings. The findings have also highlighted some of the complex aspects of stories and storytelling; it involves again the relationship between individuals and communities, including the physical environment and 'stories of place'. The theme of sharing stories is strongly linked to the two previous themes of arts as a catalyst (as we have demonstrated, often the story is in itself the catalyst), and connecting people. Indeed, people are able to connect on a deeper level emotionally through stories, as they can express themselves in imaginative and metaphorical ways.

We have included storytelling approaches as part of our research methodology, and our findings also suggest their value in relation to evaluating arts and cultural activities. We thus feel that stories and storytelling are crucial dimensions of cultural value. Moreover, our findings have suggested that in assessing cultural value, we need to ensure that the stories of artists and creative practitioners are included, as their experiences can reveal much about cultural value. The resources that we have produced have been shaped by the recognition of the value of storytelling, and we anticipate that they will support on-going research into cultural value.

- **Crossing geographical divides**

The final theme that we wish to particularly highlight and discuss is the value of arts and culture in relation to crossing geographical divides. We have already noted some of the ways in which arts and cultural activities can create 'bridging' social capital, connecting people of different backgrounds in various ways. However, we would also like to return to the idea of the arts as a 'universal language' which was discussed in a number of the interviews. Whilst not uncritically accepting this notion, given the inherently subjective nature of arts and cultural activities, our findings do suggest that the idea of the arts as a universal language is a significant one in terms of cultural value. The idea can be related theoretically to Hoffman's (2000) psychological framework of empathic development, as it involves what Hoffman refers to as 'mimicry and afferent feedback'. This relates to the ways in which we imitate certain facial expressions and gestures of others as an involuntary reflex, and in so doing to recreate the emotion in ourselves that gave rise to the expression in the other. Certain facial expressions and the emotions that produce them – like fear, disgust and sadness – are generally regarded as universal and therefore cut across all cultural divides, and in this sense transcend spoken language. When we experience such an expression on the face of another person we imitate it to some degree, and imitating it produces (reverse engineers) the emotion that gave rise to it in the other.

In an article that links the results of neuro-scientific research and 'empathic social interaction' in art classrooms, Jeffers (2009a) refers to a *connective aesthetics*, a response that relies 'on the imaginative and reconstructive processes of the brain.' Empathy, she claims, 'involves embodied simulations that allow human beings to understand the world of objects and the world of others'. These simulations can be induced not only by 'expressive faces' but also by 'gesturing hands [and] signifying tools and strokes.' In another article, Jeffers gives an example of this in the context of a multicultural arts education setting, in which students shared arts and cultural objects that were particularly meaningful to them. She highlights the emotional connections that were forged between students:

"In their reflections, students sometimes described presenters' honesty, facial expressions or emotions, for example mentioning a face that showed "a fierced determined look" or "passion and excitement" and eyes filled with tears...Though they did not always remember a presenter's name or have much in common with that individual, students had clear memories of these connections, their authenticity, impact and meaning."

(Jeffers 2009b:12)

This resonates strongly with our findings about the value of arts and culture in generating empathy across geographical divides through emotional connection, and in effect functioning as a 'language of its own'. This was also discussed in relation to the research visit, during which the team reflected on different aspects of shared

experiences: nods and smiles, observing the responses of others, the shared journey to a gallery and sitting on the steps afterwards, and the ways in which these were all elements of the creative experience. We suggest that these interactions, that transcend verbal communication, all have a particular value that warrants greater recognition, and that perhaps greater confidence is needed on the part of those working in the creative sectors, to highlight such seemingly unremarkable connections as a key part of the value of their work. The resources that we have created as an outcome of this project could be used to explore such connections. Finally, we would also suggest that exploring the value of art as a 'universal language' presents collaborative research opportunities between arts and science researchers.

Having thus identified a number of different dimensions of cultural value, with reference to our findings and existing literature, we will next demonstrate the ways in which our findings have resulted in a range of resources that will contribute to the on-going work to demonstrate cultural value.

Resources

In this final section of our report, we demonstrate some of the ways that we have linked our research findings to existing literature and in doing so, have developed a new 'conceptual map' for the design and evaluation of participatory arts activities in ways that will better demonstrate their value in relation to empathy, compassion and understanding. We will then discuss the series of short films that have been produced as part of this project, and consider the ways in which we anticipate that they too will contribute to on-going discussion, reflection and better understanding of issues of cultural value. One of the outputs of the project that was developed in response to our working group discussions was a set of 'Caring Cards'. These cards are designed as a set of playing cards, and include original illustrations by artist Nicola Winstanley: they are intended as a resource for community and participatory artists to support them to plan, run and evaluate their activities with more explicit understanding and recognition of issues of empathy, compassion and understanding. We will discuss how the cards were developed and how we hope that they will be used. We will also discuss the ways in which we are using the extensive collection of photographs that have resulted from the project to help with disseminating the findings. Furthermore, we will also highlight the development of a teaching resource based upon the findings and using the other resources to support the professional development of artists.

There were a number of ways in which the research findings influenced the development of the resources. Given the emphasis that artists placed on the need to understand cultural value at every stage of the creative process, we wanted the resources to focus strongly on a 'plan', 'do' and 'review' project cycle. We have incorporated much of our qualitative data into the resources and we have used our theoretical and thematic analyses to structure and present the findings in ways which meet the needs of the different audiences who have an interest in the cultural value of empathy, compassion and understanding. Our research demonstrates the value of the arts in conveying stories, and we have thus chosen to develop creative resources in response to our research both to present some of the findings but also to help artists demonstrate the value of their work.

Conceptual Map

One of our important objectives in completing this research project has been to develop resources based upon theoretical perspectives and research findings that address the on-going need to demonstrate cultural value. To this end, we have developed a conceptual map that is intended as a guide to exploring the manifestation of empathy and compassion in an arts event; its aims are to facilitate analyses of arts events from that perspective and to provide art practitioners and event organisers with another tool when planning, designing or evaluating a project. Its production has incorporated both the theoretical aspects of our research and our findings. Theoretically, it is based upon two key sources: firstly, a report produced by Annabel Jackson Associates (2012) for Visual Arts South West that developed 'a methodology to explore and evaluate quality of

experience in contemporary visual arts exhibitions'. A key element of this report, one that led to the draft model of the arts experience that it produced, is conceptualisation. This, it explains:

...is important to set the boundaries on the subject, identify its elements, and clarify its relationship to other concepts like artistic quality. A good conceptualisation improves the focus, meaningfulness and usefulness of any subsequent evaluation. It brings assumptions to the surface where they can be discussed and questioned (AJA 2012: 8)

We have adapted and simplified the model produced in the above report in order to focus more specifically on the empathic and sympathetic elements of arts events, particularly on the extent to which empathy, compassion and understanding can link distant geographical communities. Whilst keeping its essential temporal dimension, the model has also been enriched for our purposes with Martin L. Hoffman's (2000) psychological framework of empathic development. Our own research data has also been used to further develop the framework. The map identifies and explores the complex issues that need to be considered when evaluating an arts event in terms of empathy and compassion (including developmental aspects), and concludes with a series of 'key questions' that could form the basis of an evaluation tool. The detailed analysis will be available as a journal article, and it has also contributed to the development of other resources such as the 'Caring Cards' (see below).

Films

We had originally proposed to make just one ten-minute film that would disseminate our research and contribute to the on-going discussions about the value of arts and culture in terms of empathy, compassion and understanding. However, we realised as we accumulated many hours of filmed materials that we could produce far more than just one film. Moreover, the feedback from the working group sessions clearly indicated that the creative practitioners that we were working with had little enthusiasm for 'yet another toolkit'. They preferred instead to use other people as a resource in terms of sharing knowledge and experiences, and we felt that the use of film could be an effective way of doing this and of reaching considerable numbers of people in the process. We therefore commissioned additional films to be produced, resulting in a series of eleven short films that are shared on the project website:

- 1) The project film: the background to the research and discussions focusing on the key research questions and findings.
- 2) A short film telling the story of Stoke-on-Trent and Lidice.
- 3) The Czech Republic visit film: sharing the story of the research visit to Prague and Lidice, and some of the key activities and conversations.
- 4) 'Plan', 'Do' and 'Review'. Three short films that include interviews with creative practitioners about how they address issues of empathy, compassion and understanding at each stage of the project cycle.

- 5) Series of four case study films: highlighting projects that have connected people across geographical divides.
- 6) Short film about the impact of our research project on the people who have taken part, and on the next steps for the research team.

We know from what participants have told us that taking part in this research project was often the first time that they had discussed with others some of the key issues that are central to their practice. We therefore feel that it is immensely valuable to have captured so many of these discussions on film. We hope that the films will contribute to developing a language for how we talk about the value of arts and culture in terms of empathy, compassion and understanding. We also anticipate that they will communicate the findings of the research in an accessible and far-reaching way, through the use of social media and our wide range of professional networks, including past and current partners in European arts projects. This will support practice and contribute to on-going reflection and discussion of cultural value.

Caring Cards

The Caring Cards were an outcome of the project that we had not originally planned for. The idea stemmed from the working group discussions. One of the activities in the working group sessions involved taking along a range of existing participatory arts resources for people to discuss and comment upon. We noticed that it was often the fun, playful resources that attracted and engaged people. We also became aware that artists had limited time to engage in wider reading and analysis of their work. One of the criticisms of working in socially engaged art was that creative practitioners said that they often felt under pressure to respond to measurement tools which were often provided by management or funding, and they did not feel necessarily captured the essence of their work. Creative practitioners were able to talk eloquently about stories of their work where they considered the arts to have an impact in terms of empathy, compassion and understanding, but felt the measures they applied to their working practices and within the context of their work were not always fully recognised or understood by the people they worked with.

Time and again, the value of discussing the key themes, group reflection and qualitative evaluation was talked about, and we therefore wanted to be able to develop a resource that supported such discussions. Moreover, there was a consensus that arts-based responses to an experience could be a particularly meaningful and powerful part of an evaluation, and so we wanted to involve an artist in designing visual metaphors to illustrate the key themes of the research. We wanted these illustrations to also provide inspiration to arts participants to develop their own creative responses.

We therefore drew upon our research findings to develop a series of cards to support the design and evaluation of participatory arts activities. We commissioned artist Nicola Winstanley to design the cards, including original illustrations. Nicola had a deep understanding of the research project, having been extensively involved as a participant at every stage. Furthermore, in her own practice, she had co-led a project called 'Unearthed' that was based upon the story of Stoke-on-Trent and Lidice and actively

involved people in contributing to a new piece of public art based on this story. She was able to feed this understanding into her designs and her overall approach to the work.

The content of the cards is structured around the plan, do, review cycle, however the card format takes into consideration that creative processes are often non linear, and likewise, creative practitioners may only feel it is relevant to chose an individual card to focus on a specific aspect of their work. The cards consider the issues of cultural value and empathy, compassion and understanding from a range of perspectives, all informed by the research, and including the challenges and barriers that were identified by participants. We feel that the cards have a number of important strengths as a resource for practitioners:

- The Caring Cards are an entirely original resource that has been directly informed by the research evidence.
- They include participant quotes and some key themes, thus they support the dissemination of the research findings.
- They are designed to be used as a tool for project management in community and participatory arts work; they draw out and discuss the implications of the research at every stage of the project cycle.
- Each of the 'plan', 'do' and 'review' cards contains questions for creative practitioners to reflect upon their own work, either individually or as a group.
- They also include 12 cards that can be used in a participatory way with arts project participants as a tool for evaluation. These cards include questions that were informed by the conceptual map, discussed above, and also visual images for people to respond to in creative ways.
- All of the cards include original illustrations that have been developed by an artist in direct response to the themes that have emerged from the research. They are therefore visually interesting in a meaningful and engaging way.
- The images also contribute towards developing a 'visual language' to help explore the themes of empathy, compassion and understanding.

The cards are currently freely available in an online format. We plan to pilot them with participatory artists in North Staffordshire (beginning with the people who took part in the research, thus feeding back the findings and involving people in on-going work around demonstrating cultural value). Once we have gained feedback about the cards and responded accordingly, we will seek further funding to develop them into a printed resource, though we anticipate that the online version will continue to help us to reach as wide a range of individuals and organisations as possible, including overseas partners.



(A selection of the Caring Card images created by Nicola Winstanley in response to the research themes)

Photographs

As well as using film and original artwork as part of our research design and dissemination, we also involved a photographer (Scholarship Enterprise and Research Co-ordinator Kimberley Watson), in documenting the entire project. We therefore now have a wealth of visual images relating to the project, which we are sharing widely in a number of ways. They are available in albums on the project Blog. We also created a Photobook that tells the story of the project in an accessible way, and includes some of the most outstanding images from the project. This will be used at conferences, seminars and other dissemination events to share our work. In addition, we have created a number of exhibition panels (using lightweight foam board), featuring photographs from every stage of the research. These will be exhibited at Staffordshire University, and a number of dissemination events are planned. For example, in December 2014, our Faculty's Applied Research Centres will be holding an event focused on narrative research and storytelling. The exhibition (including the Photobook) will be displayed; the films will be shown, and there will be presentations about the research. A range of external partners, including all research participants, will also be invited to attend.

Teaching Resource

Janet Hetherington, (Co-Investigator) leads the MA in Community and Participatory Arts programme, and the Artist's Professional Development Programme: Developing Arts for Health in the Creative Communities Unit at Staffordshire University. The findings and outputs of this research project have been developed into a session plan focusing on cultural value in relation to empathy, compassion and understanding. The plan can be found in Appendix 3

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research project set out to explore the value of arts and culture in relation to developing empathy, compassion and understanding. Based upon the case study of Stoke-on-Trent and Lidice, we explored why we would choose the medium of arts and culture to connect distant geographical communities in ways that foster empathy, compassion and understanding. We also addressed the question of how we can design and evaluate arts activities in ways that better demonstrates their value in relation to these key issues. We focused specifically on storytelling approaches in the context of community and participatory arts activities and exhibitions.

We involved twice as many participants in our research as we had originally proposed. This was due to the significant levels of interest in the project and people's desire to be involved and to contribute to the research questions. There is no doubt that we could have recruited many more participants if time and resources had allowed. This demonstrates that many people perceive the relationship with empathy, compassion and understanding to be an important aspect of cultural value and one which they are interested to understand in greater depth. We believe that the overwhelmingly positive levels of interest and participation in our research by artists and creative practitioners, is a finding in itself in relation to cultural value.

Our research methodology was qualitative, participatory, and involved the use of a case study and of creative research methods. We found that these were effective ways of exploring cultural value. It allowed for in-depth reflection and new understandings. The inter-disciplinary research team, and the involvement of academic participants from a range of backgrounds provided an opportunity to share and explore understandings from a wide range of perspectives. Moreover, the involvement of artists and creative practitioners, and of a Local Authority Strategic Manager as a member of the research team, meant that a strong focus was maintained on the practical application of our findings to the on-going challenge of demonstrating cultural value. The inclusion of a working group involving academics and creative practitioners was a very important aspect of the research process: it helped to shape the research agenda, cross-check the findings, and to support the development of new approaches and resources to demonstrate cultural value.

We have thus demonstrated through our research the importance of including a wide range of voices in the debate about cultural value. Not only does this include a range of artists, creative practitioners, and academics from a range of disciplines, but also international partners, through the visit to the Czech Republic. In particular, we have noted that the 'stories' of artists and creative practitioners are often not heard, and that it is important to consider cultural value throughout the whole creative process, hence our focus in developing resources on applying our findings to every stage of the project cycle.

Our study generated a wealth of qualitative data, and we have addressed the challenge of analysing and translating that data to produce written reports and other resources in

a range of different ways. Our findings have particularly highlighted the potential of the arts to act as a 'catalyst' in terms of empathy, compassion and understanding. In exploring this further, the value of stories and storytelling is central in terms of making connections and enabling people to relate to the individual person, thus challenging their view of the stereotypical 'other'. We have also found that the idea of the arts as a 'universal language' that enables people to connect on a more emotional level, is of crucial importance when considering the ways in which arts and culture can bridge geographical divides.

In applying the findings to the development of resources, we have been strongly influenced by the idea that you cannot (and arguably should not) plan for empathy and compassion, but that through *understanding* people and places and stories you can create the conditions for these things to develop. This has highlighted the key role of the participatory artist or creative practitioner, and their experiences, values and motivations. In particular, we have focused on the idea of social action, and the ways in which people endeavour to 'make a difference' through their practice.

In exploring ways of evaluating arts events and exhibitions in terms of empathy, compassion and understanding, we have found that qualitative approaches are seen as the most effective way of capturing the difference that the work has made, particularly because of their potential for encouraging imaginative and metaphorical responses. We have also identified ways in which stories and creative responses can be used effectively as an integral part of the project activities. We have argued that inclusive, participatory approaches are invaluable in involving arts participants in reflecting on and understanding cultural value.

Just as our approach to our research was designed to be inclusive and participatory, so we have applied our findings to developing a range of resources and dissemination material that we anticipate will enable us to reach very wide audiences. Through doing so, we are seeking to involve others, including our international partners, in the challenge of demonstrating cultural value. As well as this report and other publications that we are developing, the research has resulted in a series of short films, a set of Caring Cards to be used by participatory artists, a Conceptual Map (and accompanying evaluation tool), a teaching resource and a photobook and exhibition panels to share the story and images of our research at dissemination events.

The nature of the case study - the story of Stoke-on-Trent and Lidice - provided a specific frame of reference for discussions in this project, which has inevitably shaped some of the findings. It would thus be useful to address the research questions in other geographical locations and in the context of different community stories, in order to assess the generaliseability of the findings. Whilst we successfully engaged many more people than we anticipated in the research, we were also limited by the relatively short timescale of the project, and could easily have engaged more participants with more time and resources. The contribution of artists and creative practitioners to the project provided strength and diversity to the research, and we gained valuable insights and new understandings through their participation. Their involvement helped to highlight arts-based narrative approaches to evaluation and assessing cultural value, but the

resources that have been produced require piloting and evaluating by other artists and creative practitioners, to test their validity and usefulness. These limitations can only be assessed through further research, and this report contains a number of suggestions for areas to address.

Our Cultural Value project has nurtured some effective working relationships between academics and creative practitioners. The commitment of the research participants has enabled us to peer review ideas and concepts. The results of our research have demonstrated the value of arts and culture in relation to empathy, compassion and understanding. We have gained new insights into the ways in which stories can make connections across geographical divides, and the resources that we have produced will have a direct impact on future projects. We now turn our attention to the development of a proposal for a new research project with partners in Lidice. The proposal will be informed by the findings of our Cultural Value project. We would like to further build upon the new and existing connections that we have made with academics and creative practitioners, both in Staffordshire and the Czech Republic. Again, we will utilise the new understandings that we now have of the common issues affecting creative practitioner and organisations in both countries.

People from both countries identified the challenges involved in engaging local older people in their work, and this was an area of work which many participants felt was significant in terms of demonstrating cultural value in relation to empathy, compassion and understanding. We propose to use the Caring Cards to engage with our partners in Lidice, to start exploring the potential to develop a project which uses the arts to engage older people in local arts venues and also across a geographical divide. The new project will enable us to pilot and further develop our tools, including the Caring Cards and the conceptual map. It will also offer us a new perspective focusing on a specific art form and population of people, and this will create comparable data to help us find ways to assess the cultural value of empathy, compassion and understanding involving different groups of people. Whereas the present research has included a focus on the historical events and relationship between Stoke-on-Trent and Lidice, our aim for any new research project is to be forward looking and to develop new conversations and stories.

Appendix 1: Research Methodology and Methodological Advances

Full details of our research methodology and methodological advances can be found in the main body of this report. We present here a brief summary of our approaches, both in terms of the methodology used in the research project and in terms of the resources that have been designed with the aim of better demonstrating cultural value in relation to empathy, compassion and understanding. Our summary includes a short explanation of why we feel that the methods highlighted are particularly appropriate for understanding and demonstrating cultural value.

Research Methodology/Methods	Rationale
Stoke-on-Trent/Lidice Case study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a focus for the research, especially from a storytelling perspective • Offers an international perspective • Effective in engaging participants, due to the levels of interest in the story and the relationship both in Stoke-on-Trent and Lidice • Provided for an overseas research visit (see below)
Research visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Built upon the rationale for the case study (see above) • Enabled direct engagement with creative practitioners in Prague and Lidice • Provided spaces and time for the research team to reflect on the emerging findings • Enabled us to plan a future project with creative practitioners in Lidice, which will help to maintain the relationship and contribute to on-going focus on cultural value in the UK and in the Czech Republic
Multi-disciplinary focus groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offered a range of academic perspectives and insights • Recognises that academics from all disciplines can contribute to the cultural value debate • Potential for future cross-faculty collaboration in this area • Involvement of artists and creative practitioners gave valuable insights into practice (also note the blurred boundaries between 'artists' and 'academics' – many identified as both). • Opportunities for in-depth reflection and discussion • Evidence that participants valued the opportunity to discuss cultural value and to learn from each other

Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See focus groups – enabled the contribution of a range of artists and academics • In depth discussions, shared meaning making.
Working group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A highly participatory approach • Enabled participants to contribute to the design and development of the research project • Opportunities to cross-check emerging findings • Opportunities to explore in greater detail themes and issues identified in the interviews and focus groups • Enabled a strong focus on the needs of practitioners – trying out existing resources; discussing what would be the most helpful way to support their work in relation to cultural value • Enabled us to engage a team to go on the research visit, and helped to inform the visit itself.
Film	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The film makers, as artists, directly contributed to the work of the research team, rather than operating as detached observers • Filming the project contributed to the story telling approach that ran throughout the research • Enabled us to capture and share elements of the research process that would not normally be recorded – e.g. the research team’s discussions • As researchers, contributing to the editing process enables further cross-checking of findings, as it requires thematic analysis of filmed data • The film makers’ role in editing is another participatory dimension to the research • Enables us to reach a much wider audience, supporting on-going discussions about cultural value • Provides artistic means of expressing cultural value
Photography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a visual record of the research • Along with the filming, offers an artistic way of representing cultural value • Supports dissemination to wider audiences, especially through sharing on website • Enabled the production of a Photo book, including the story of the research, which is another valuable resource for sharing the project.

Resources	Rationale
Conceptual map	<p><i>N.B. ALL resources are directly informed by the research findings and support the on-going need to demonstrate cultural value</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addresses the need to ensure a theoretical basis for other resources • Includes a new evaluation tool to demonstrate cultural value in terms of empathy, compassion and understanding
Films	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See p.67 • Identified by the working group as being valuable – enables people to widely share their experiences and insights • Includes a number of short films to highlight artists’ practices in relation to the key issues at every stage of the project cycle • Easy to share via social media
Caring Cards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Represents the research findings through original artwork, as well as quotes from participants and other research informed questions and recommendations • The format of the cards is based upon feedback from the working group • They support both the design and evaluation of arts activities in ways that better demonstrates their cultural value • They offer ideas and questions for discussion, to support on-going reflection on cultural value • They also provide provocations for arts-based evaluation responses
Photographs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See p.67
Teaching Resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds knowledge and discussion about cultural value into the professional development of artists and creative practitioners • Enables on-going dissemination and impact of the research

Appendix 2: References and external links

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External Links

Project blog: <http://blogs.staffs.ac.uk/culturalvalue/> (Includes links to Caring Cards, films, and other resources)

Project Films: <http://vimeo.com/channels/culturalvalue>

Appendix 3: Session Plan for Artists' Professional Development

Session Plan

Award Title: MA Community and Participatory Arts

Level: 4/7

Module Title: Artist Professional Development Programme: Developing Arts for Health

Topic: Cultural Value and participatory arts: Compassion, Empathy and Understanding (half day session)

Aims and Objectives

By the end of this session learners will be able to explain how to assess their participatory arts work in relation to the cultural value of compassion, empathy and understanding.

- 1. Participants will be able to apply definitions of cultural value to their own work*
- 2. Participants will be able to critically reflect upon the concepts of empathy, compassion and understanding to their participatory arts work*
- 3. Participants can develop strategies for assessing these concepts in the context of their work*

What prior knowledge and skills are learners bringing to this lesson?

Experience of delivering, facilitating or managing participatory and community arts work.

An interest and experience of applying community and participatory arts practice to work, which is being delivered in a health context.

An awareness of cultural value and the relevance it has on their practice.

An understanding of the concepts of compassion, empathy and understanding and how they relate to their work both in terms of practice and in relation to project outcomes.

N.B. Consider aspects of Health and Safety and Equality and Diversity

What resources (including ILT) need to be prepared in advance for this session?

Course Handbook

Blackboard with key documents

Sticky wall and labels

Smartboard and data projector with access to Skype and audio facility

Caring cards, clipboards, paper, pens

Umbrellas

Room layout:

Cabaret style

Explain and justify layout:

The intention is to create an informal and welcoming environment, which encourages people to talk more informally about their experiences.

Small tables are effective for group work and enables people to work collaboratively to engage with Skype.

Time & Objective	Content	Learner Activity	Teacher Activity
20min/ 1	Cultural value- what is it? (An activity as people enter the room)	Use the cultural commissioning model for people to map your experiences of where and how they work. Assessment: Review the map and discuss observations with the class.	Use the cultural commissioning framework to get participants to reflect upon and their experiences of work and relationships with commissioners. Resources: Sticky wall/ paper/pens
20min/1	Observe the presentation and engage in 2 whole class discussions prompted by questions within the presentation	Observe the presentation and engage in 2 whole class discussions prompted by questions within the presentation	Use Prezi to present findings interposed with questions to the participants (facilitated as a group discussion) Resources: Prezi presentation
10min/2	Group discussion about the connection to their work	Small Group work to develop a group response to the findings: Identify 3 points which connect to your own experiences Assessment: Get participants to compare and contrast experiences	Break into small groups and invite participants to -Discuss how the findings relate to their experiences - To agree upon 3 points which commonly relate to their experiences Resources: Paper for the tables, pens
45 min/2&3	Stories and social change- how do you start the story? Case study cards mapping exercise	Pair work- Go for a walk and look at the card relating to stories and social change. Talk about how you would apply it to your work What voices need to be heard? How will you enable people to tell their stories?	Explain the caring cards and the task on the stories and social change card Break group into pairs and instruct them to walk and talk

		<p>In what ways will you ensure that they are able to do so safely, and that they can make informed choices about the content, production and use of their work?</p> <p>On return have a drinks break, during which you contribute responses on to the 'sticky wall'.</p> <p>How did the card help/hinder?</p> <p>How will the conversation change your practice?</p> <p>Assessment: Have participants report back the key 3 points from their conversation Complete question cards</p>	<p>Provide refreshments and ask participants to comment to questions about the caring cards on the sticky wall. Review these responses as a group.</p> <p>Resources: Caring cards (multiple sharing stories) Clipboard, pens, Refreshments, sticky wall, pens</p>
30 min/3	Next steps	<p>Finish by choosing what your next card will be (individual task)- how will you assess these themes in the context of your work- what value do they have to you?</p> <p>Assessment: Share responses with other participants and facilitate a peer review process</p>	<p>Talk through the plan, do, review cycle. Share and summarise the remaining caring cards and invite participants to choose their next one. Post ideas and thoughts on the sticky wall as they leave</p> <p>Resources: Caring cards Sticky wall Pens, paper</p>

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the AHRC for funding this research. A special thanks also to Suzanne James and Darren Teale (of Junction 15), for the outstanding work that they did as film makers for this project. Nicola Winstanley has also made an invaluable contribution to the project, through her interest and commitment throughout, and for the wonderful design and illustration work on the Caring Cards resource. Thanks to our colleague Kimberley Watson for co-ordinating project activities and for documenting the project through photographs. Finally, we are immensely grateful to the following individuals for the various ways in which they have generously contributed their time to this project and for sharing with us their knowledge, experiences and expertise.

Garry Abbott	Tony Jones	Melanie Stace
Sylvia Baddeley	Ivona Kasalicka	Glen Stoker
Paul Bailey	Peter Kevern	Dr Caroline Sturdy-Colls
Lisa Beeston	Sylvia Klanova	Adrian Tooth
Keith Bloor	Manoubi Ben Lamri	Prof. Fiona Tweed
David Clark-Carter	Deborah McAndrew	Devina Visram
Susan Clarke	Zuzana Masna	Fiona Waddle
Andy Collins	Michael	Mark Webster
Rebecca Frankenberg	Jean Milton	Nicola Winstanley
Jackie Gregory	Susan Moffatt	
Karl Greenwood	Ian Moore	
Sue Greenwood	Sarah Nadin	
Luba Hedlova	Andy Platt	
Misha Herwin	Cathie Powell-Davies	
Fred Hughes	Deborah Rogers	
Hilary Hughes	Sarah	
Dr Martin Jesinghausen	Cathy Shingler	
Jill	John Snowdon	

“People can stand in a queue together for the bank, people can sit on the bus together, people can go to college together, they don’t have any reason to connect. What is the thing that is allowing those people to connect one with the other unless it is a shared experience of an artistic experience, or a cultural experience - unless there is something there to get that conversation going? We have great faith that people will connect with each other if you give them that opportunity to have that conversation, to find those tiny little moments that are going to reach across continents; but without those - without that cultural context, without that art’s experience, how is that going to happen?”

Susan Clarke
Artistic Director, B-Arts

